



WATERWISE PLANT GUIDE

Beautiful plants for sustainable
Sunshine Coast gardens



Some gardening terms

Fertile soil: Soil rich with organic matter and plant nutrients.

Full sun: At least six hours of direct sunlight per day from May through August.

Humus: Decayed plant material that contributes to soil fertility.

Non-invasive plant: (1) a native plant; or (2) a non-native plant that won't survive and spread outside of a garden; therefore, does not pose threats to native species and ecosystems.

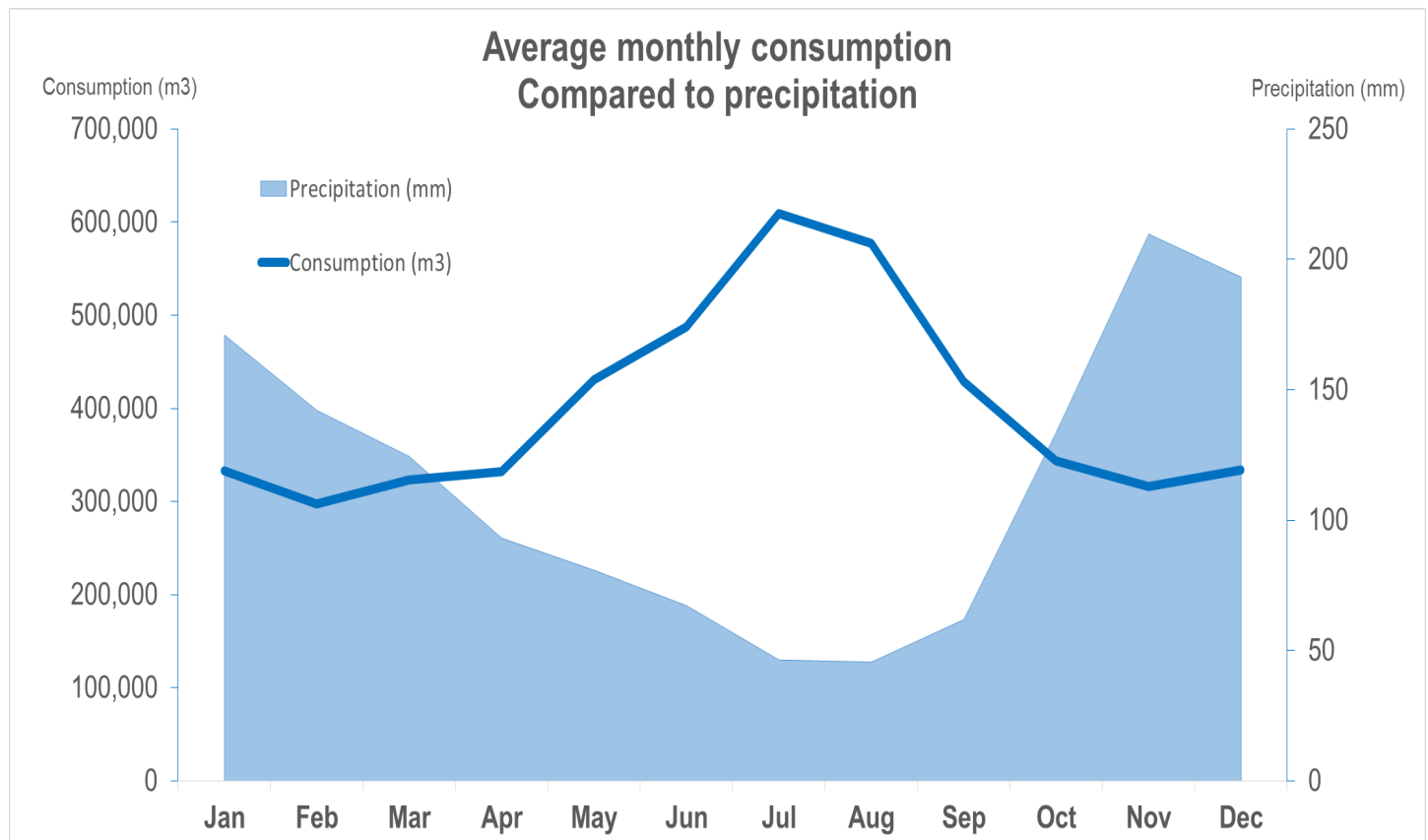
Mulch: A layer of material that covers the ground between plants. Mulch helps conserve soil moisture while allowing water and oxygen to reach plant roots. It also discourages weeds and protects plants from fluctuating soil temperatures. Plant-based mulches (commonly referred to as organic mulches) include compost, well-rotted manures, and shredded bark, leaves, and coconut fiber. Rock, gravel, and pebbles also make great mulches.

Xeriscape: A style of landscape design that requires reduced or no irrigation.

Waterwise

Protecting our water supply.

Most of us are not thinking about water conservation when we choose plants for our gardens. After all, the Sunshine Coast-- despite its name-- can feel like a very rainy place. But our summers are dry and our ability to store water from snow and rain is limited. During seasonal dry spells, household water consumption soars. In 2016, for instance, the Chapman water treatment plant distributed 575,000 cubic meters of water in July compared to 322,000 cubic meters in February. This high summer water demand is due in large part to the irrigation of lawns and landscape plants.



Growing conservation

To reduce water consumption in the garden, plan ahead and select from a diverse variety of beautiful, non-invasive, locally adapted and drought tolerant plants. Native plants as well as drought tolerant ornamental plants from similar climates are good choices. Our local nurseries have experts that can help you find waterwise plants that are best suited to your garden.

Cultivating sustainability

The foundation of a healthy garden is nutritious, water-retentive and well-drained soil. Learning about the soil conditions in your garden - and the conditions your plants require - is key to successful garden planning. Addition of organic matter, including compost, is essential to soil fertility. Preserve moisture in the soil by applying plentiful amounts of organic mulch.

Plan Ahead

Consider these points before this gardening season.

Certain plants need certain amount of water. Group plants with similar needs together to keep them healthy and to conserve water.

Hand water your plants in the morning or in the evening to avoid water loss by evaporation. Also, consider installing a drip irrigation system.

Mulches such as gravel, pebbles, and bark mulch conserve water by limiting losses by evaporation. They also impede weed growth!



Optimize the shade in your garden by planting native, drought tolerant plants.

Cut back the lawn, or lose it altogether! Add rock features or gravel and stone paths to decrease water use from sprinkling.

Keep soil loose, or replace dry soil to promote water absorption.

Select drought tolerant plants. Such as those listed in this guide.

Waterwise Gardening Resources

Bennett, Jennifer
Dry Land Gardening

Chatto, Beth
The Dry Garden

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
Landscape Guide for Canadian Homes

Rubin, Carole
How to Get Your Lawn off Grass

Sunset Books
Waterwise Gardening

www.xeriscape.org

Perennials

Perennials invigorate landscapes with colour and texture year after year. Whether used in exuberant abundance or reserved elegance, they always enhance gardens.

Divide perennials when they show signs of decreased productivity (such as weak center growth). Plants can be divided in any season, but they generally respond best in early fall. Lift plants from the ground and section them into small clumps with a sharp spade, cutting into the old, woody growth at the center. Replenish the planting area with fresh soil and keep divisions cool and moist until they are replanted.

CORSICAN HELLEBORE *HELLEBORUS ARGUTIFOLIUS*



Corsican hellebore is an evergreen perennial that blooms in late winter and early spring. It can grow up to 1 meter high and 1 meter wide, and is suited to full sun or part shade. Plant in well-drained soil with dwarf conifers, herbs, and summer-flowering perennials such as Russian sage and showy stonecrop. Cut faded blooms back at the base.

ENGLISH LAVENDER *LAVANDULA ANGUSTIFOLIA*



English lavender needs well-drained soil and a sunny place in the garden. To promote new growth and limit unproductive woody stems, prune back stems in mid-spring to 10-15 cm. Grow English lavender en masse or with other drought-tolerant edibles like sage, thyme, oregano, and rosemary.

FALSE SOLOMON'S SEAL *MAIANTHEMUM RACEMOSUM*



Naturally occurring throughout BC, False Solomon's Seal grows in full or part shade and is drought-tolerant once established. It has smooth, tapered leaves and arching stems, which bear clusters of fragrant white flowers in mid-spring and small red berries in late summer. Grow false Solomon's seal in humus-rich soil with ferns, vine maples, hostas, or rhododendrons.

LADY'S MANTLE *ALCHEMILLA MOLLIS*



Lady's mantle adapts to a variety of soil and light conditions but tolerates dry weather best when planted in fertile, well-drained soil and protected from strong summer sun. With a "time-is-money" attitude, it quickly establishes clumps 35 cm high and twice as wide.

RUSSIAN SAGE *PEROVSKIA ATRIPLICIFOLIA*



Russian sage needs fast-draining soil to make it through wet Sunshine Coast winters. It has fine grey foliage and produces clouds of small purple-blue flowers in late summer. Cut stems back hard in spring to keep plants from developing long bare stems. Grow Russian sage in hot, sunny locations and mulch it with rock, gravel, or pebbles.

Shrubs

Shrubs are garden workhorses. They anchor seasonal plantings and soften buildings, driveways, and retaining walls. Commonly used as hedging or screens, shrubs also provide privacy and establish boundaries between properties and garden features. What's more, they are a valuable wildlife resource, providing food and shelter for animals such as birds and butterflies.

Help drought-tolerant shrubs establish healthy roots by watering them thoroughly during dry conditions for their first two years. In spring, add a mulch of organic material, rock, or pebbles to help keep plant roots cool and moist to minimize watering needs through summer. Spring is also a good time to apply a slow-release fertilizer to shrubs.

CALIFORNIA LILAC *CEANOTHUS 'VICTORIA'*



A very drought-tolerant evergreen, California lilac thrives in sheltered spots with hot sun and fast-draining soil. The cultivar 'Victoria' has a dense, rounded shape and it can grow up to 1 meter wide and 2 meters high within ten years. In late spring, it is covered with blue flowers that attract bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies. Tolerant of salt spray, California lilac is suited to seaside gardens.

EVERGREEN HUCKLEBERRY *VACCINIUM OVATUM*



An adaptable shrub, this Sunshine Coast resident grows in full sun to full shade. It has glossy evergreen leaves and produces pale pink flowers in late spring, followed by edible berries in summer. Evergreen huckleberry can grow more than 2 m high and wide but can be pruned for size. Plant it in well-drained soil amended with humus. Apply a generous mulch of organic material each spring.

GREY'S SENECIO *SENECIO GREYI*



Perfect for exposed sites with sharp drainage, Grey's Senecio (also known as *Brachyglottis greyi*) is an extremely drought-tolerant evergreen. Its silvery leaves and bright yellow flowers are well-suited to colourful groupings of California lilac, showy stonecrop, and Russian sage. Grey's Senecio forms soft rounded mounds 1 meter high and wide. To promote new growth, cut back old stems by two-thirds in spring.

RED-FLOWERING CURRANT *RIBES SANGUINEUM*



An important food source for humming birds, red-flowering currant starts blooming in March when most other plants are hitting the snooze button. This indigenous shrub isn't fussy about light levels but prefers well-drained soil. Growing up to 3 meters high and 2 meters wide in sun, red flowering currant is deciduous and has edible blue berries. Plant it with evergreens, spring-flowering bulbs, and summer-flowering perennials.

RUGOSA ROSES *ROSA RUGOSA CULTIVARS*



Rugosa roses are as tough as they are pretty, thriving in hot sun and sandy soil. There are many flower colours and scents to choose from, with bloom times extending from spring to fall. Rugosa foliage resists disease, tolerates salt spray, and takes on gold hues in autumn. This rose is a favorite of birds, bees, and butterflies.

Trees

Select landscape trees carefully. Keep in mind that roots can extend past a tree's branches and that trees should not be planted close to underground structures (such as septic fields) and paved areas. Buy plants with healthy leaves or buds, undamaged bark and roots, and well-spaced branches.

Fall and early spring are the best times to plant trees, when weather is cool and rainy. Prepare a planting hole that is at least twice as wide as your tree's root ball and as deep. Backfill the planting hole with the original soil, amended if necessary. Tamp the soil firmly and water the tree. Apply a layer of mulch to the soil surface, ensuring that the material does not touch the tree's trunk. Water drought-tolerant trees during dry spells until they establish (typically three years).

CORNELIAN CHERRY *CORNUS MAS*



Growing approximately 3 m high and wide, this pretty tree is perfect for small spaces. It has scented flowers in early spring, tart red fruit by late summer, and jewel-toned leaves in fall. Cornelian cherry grows in full sun or part shade and prefers humus-rich, well-drained soil. It is a good companion for rhododendrons, camellias, boxwood, spring-flowering bulbs, hardy geraniums, and summer-flowering perennials.

FLOWERING CRABAPPLE *MALUS CULTIVARS*



Cheerful little trees, flowering crabapples provide months of interest with colourful flower buds, blooms, and fruit. 'Adirondack', 'Snowdrift', and 'Strawberry Parfait' are disease-resistant cultivars that grow 3 m in ten years and reach 6 m high and wide at maturity. Not particular about soil types, they perform best in full sun. Remove leggy vertical shoots that sprout from the tree's base or from horizontal-growing branches.

GINKGO *GINKGO BILOBA* "AUTUMN GOLD"



Ginkgos have been around since the days of dinosaurs, proving they are as resilient as they are attractive. Their soft fluttery leaves contrast beautifully with their strong pyramidal forms and rough bark. The cultivar 'Autumn Gold' grows 4 m tall in ten years (reaching 12 m at maturity) and lives up to its name with exceptional fall foliage. Plant Ginkgos in full or part sun and fertile, well-drained soil.

HAZEL TREE *CORYLUS AVELLANA*

While some plants nourish the soul with beauty, hazel trees feed the belly with tasty nuts packed full of protein and vitamins. Trees reach 6 m tall and almost as wide, **requiring full sun and well-drained soil**. They **don't compete well with weeds**, so keep the nuisance plants at bay with a mulch of cardboard or bark. Encourage young plants to form a shrubby growth habit by pruning back their previous year's growth by half.

ORNAMENTAL PLUM *PRUNUS CERASIFERA*



Often mistaken for cherries, ornamental plums bloom earlier in spring and tough-out dry spells better than their famous cousins. With short trunks and rounded tops, they make great climbing trees for kids. Self-sufficient, ornamental plums do not need pruning beyond the removal of damaged or rubbing branches.

Annuals and Bedding Plants

Annuals are plants that complete their life cycle in a single growing season. Many are well-suited to waterwise gardens as they sprout with spring rains and set seed during dry summer weather. They require minimal watering and fertilizing.

Bedding plants grow through our summer months but must be over-wintered indoors or replaced the following year. **Most are not suited to sustainable gardening** as they require supplemental water and nutrients to put on a show by summer's end. Some, however, are extremely drought-tolerant and provide a water-thrifty splash of colour, especially when carried over to the next year. Don't set bedding plants out early; they will suffer pitifully through cold rain and likely require fresh recruits to take their place.

CALENDULA *CALENDULA OFFICINALIS*



Calendula flowers emerge in May with daisy-like, edible petals. Plant in late spring or start from seed in March. Transplant calendulas to a location with full sun or part shade and ordinary well drained soil. Seeds can be sown outside again in June to ensure plenty of blooms for fall. Calendulas grow 60 cm tall and about half as wide. They make beautiful cut flowers.

COSMOS *COSMOS BIPINNATUS*



Cosmos bloom in late summer and fall on the Coast, providing late-season nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds. Start seeds indoors in April or sow outside in May. Cosmos grow about 1 m tall and prefer full sun and soil amended with organic matter. Do not fertilize or over-water cosmos, as they will produce fewer blooms. These flowers are easy to grow and lovely for cutting.

MOSS ROSE *PORTULACA GRANDIFLORA*



Moss rose has narrow fleshy leaves and grows about 15 cm high and 30 cm wide during the Coast's summer season. Plants are available in a range of flower colours, from strong red and yellow to soft pink and white. Native to Brazil and Argentina, moss rose needs hot sandy soil and full sun. Do not set plants out before the weather is warm, as they do poorly in cold rainy conditions.

PETUNIA *PETUNIA X HYBRIDA*



These punchy plants have been hybridized to produce a range of blooms. Some petunias are large with flamboyant ruffles, stripes, and speckles, while others are small and demure. Some are fragrant and some hold up well in rain, but all flower profusely through summer and fall. Grow them in full sun and well-drained soil. Cut plants back halfway in midsummer to promote compact growth.

ZONAL GERANIUM *PELARGONIUM X HORTORUM*



Geraniums are synonymous with summer. They grow well in containers, in full sun and well-drained soil, happiest when their roots are a bit restricted. Young plants purchased from garden centers bloom from May until frost and can be over-wintered indoors in a cool location. Zonal geraniums are named for the dark green circles on their leaves

Groundcovers and Climbers

Low-growing groundcovers prevent soil erosion and steal space from weeds. Many also attract birds, bees, and butterflies. Groundcovers are most effective when used in mass plantings. Avoid planting invasive exotics such as English ivy and periwinkle, as they often invade natural habitats and disrupt ecosystems.

In contrast to groundcovers, climbers make great use of vertical space. Most are strong, heavy plants that require the support of solid structures. Encourage horizontal growth (which produces flowers and fruit) by wrapping plants around pillars, or by letting them spread across structures.

BEARBERRY COTONEASTER *COTONEASTER DAMMERI*



Bearberry cotoneaster is an evergreen with white spring blooms and scarlet berries that last through winter. It hugs the ground, spreads about 2 meters wide, and looks splendid spilling over retaining walls or splashing up against rocks. Grow it in full sun or part shade and well-drained soil. Its vibrant red fruit contrasts nicely with blue-leaved plants like Colorado spruce and blue oat grass.

BEACH STRAWBERRY *FRAGARIA CHILOENSIS*



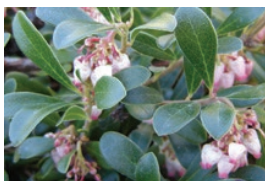
As its name suggests, beach strawberry is adapted to sunny sites and sandy, fast-draining soil. It has glossy evergreen leaves and produces white blossoms and small red berries. Beach strawberry grows up to 20 cm tall and propagates by runners, which extend over the ground to form new plants. Native to the Sunshine Coast, it grows well among ornamental grasses, rugosa roses, potentilla shrubs, and California lilacs.

GRAPEVINES *VITIS VINIFERA CULTIVARS*



Plant a grapevine and you will have fruit for munching and wine-making, leaves for dolmathes, and twigs for barbecue skewers. Provide vines with full sun and deeply cultivated soil that contains lots of compost and some lime. Grapevines can be grown up the side of a house or kept low. Read up on pruning techniques for maximum fruit production. Water plants deeply during dry conditions for their first year.

KINNIKINNICK/BEARBERRY *ARCTOSTAPHYLOS UVA-URSI*



Kinnikinnick is a low-growing evergreen shrub found in sunny sandy locations throughout much of BC. These small flowers herald spring and attract hummingbirds, while its red berries add colour to winter landscapes. Branches set root in soil, allowing plants to spread wide over time.

GOLDEN STONECROP *SEDUM ACRE 'AUREUM'*



An extremely hardy plant, golden stonecrop shrugs off freezing temperatures and dry conditions. It grows 8 cm high and 30-45 cm wide, producing star-shaped yellow flowers in June. Set golden stonecrop in full sun and well-drained soil along the edge of beds, in rock gardens, between pavers, or in containers.

Ornamental grass, Ferns and Cycads

Ornamental grasses provide year-round appeal with attractive foliage and seed heads. In winter, ornamental grasses provide relief from bleak landscapes with tan foliage and seed heads that attract birds. Provide grasses with good drainage and water them during dry weather until they are established.

While ornamental grasses evoke prairie landscapes, ferns are always associated with lush environments. Nevertheless, some ferns are remarkably drought tolerant. Such is the case with the sword fern, which grows all over the Sunshine Coast. The secret to its water-wise ways is afternoon shade, humus-rich soil, and a protective mulch of organic material.

BLUE OAT GRASS *HELICTOTRICHON SEMPERVIRENS*



With its arching, oat-like seed heads and attractive blue-green foliage, blue oat grass is an excellent grass for coastal gardens. Plant it in a sunny spot with well-drained soil and the company of heaths, heathers, and pines, or summer-flowering perennials such as purple coneflower and goldenrod. This grass forms clumps 0.5 m high and wide. It should be cut back in late winter or early spring.

CYCAD *CYCAS PANZIHUAENSIS*



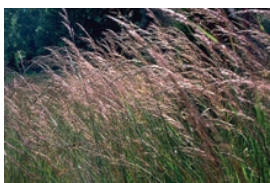
Bored with geraniums? Got lots of lavender? Then try growing a cycad. An ancient plant that withstands frost and snow, it does best on a raised mound of sandy, fast-draining soil, where it is protected from excessive rain. Cycads prefer full sun but will also grow in dappled shade. Long-lived and slow-growing, they resemble ferns for the first 20 years, after which they look more like palms.

GIANT NEEDLE GRASS *STIPA GIGANTEA*



The seed heads of giant needle grass soar on stems over 2 m tall, creating a dramatic statement in the garden. Native to Spain and Portugal, the grass needs a hot, sunny location and fast-draining soil. Plant giant needle grass where it will be backlit by sun, or contrast it against the dark bark of pines. Over-fertilization causes weak, floppy stems

LITTLE BLUESTEM *SCHIZACHYRIUM SCOPARIUM*



Little bluestem is a prairie grass adapted to full sun and well-drained soil. Excessive watering and fertilizing cause it to flop, ruining its upright growth habit. Growing 1 meter tall and half as wide, little bluestem has green leaves that take on rusty hues in fall. It looks best in mass plantings that sway in the breeze and capture the sun's glow.

SWORD FERN *POLYSTICHUM MUNITUM*



This Northwest icon is well-adapted to our region's seasonal downpours and dry spells. An evergreen that can reach over a meter in height and width, it naturally occurs in moist woodland settings. Plant sword fern in well-drained, humus-rich soil and full to part shade, and mulch it regularly with organic material. Tidy plants in spring by cutting the previous year's leaves back at the base.