

Gardening with recycled water in the Rouse Hill area

Using recycled water in your garden is very similar to using drinking water.

By understanding a few recycled water basics and following all the usual good gardening practices, you'll be well on the way to a beautiful, healthy garden.

Recycled water has been used in the Rouse Hill area since 2001, and has been keeping golf courses and sports fields green for many years.

Our high quality recycled water can be used on a wide range of garden plants including vegetables, salad greens and fruit¹. You should always wash garden produce in cool drinking water immediately before cooking or eating. Scrub fruit and vegetables with hard surfaces (such as rockmelons, oranges, potatoes and carrots) with a clean produce brush. Cut away bruised or damaged areas before eating.



¹ Approved by NSW Health

Know your soil

Soil conditions vary greatly across Sydney and sometimes present challenges to gardeners, regardless of the type of water used.

The Rouse Hill area is in Sydney's north-west. In this area you are likely to find:

- **Clay soils** – these soils are good at holding water and nutrients but tend to restrict drainage, and can become waterlogged. They can be improved by adding gypsum or organic matter, such as compost.
If you add water to a small handful of garden soil, and are able to roll it into a ball, it probably has high clay content.
- **Loams** – this type of soil is the gardener's favourite as it suits most types of plants. It has good drainage but can be improved by adding compost.
- **Acidic soils** – depending on the level of acidity, these soils can cause problems with plant growth. Inexpensive testing kits from nurseries can help you understand your soil, monitor its condition and work out how to improve it. For example, the application of lime can be beneficial on some acidic soils.

Learn more about soils at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au under 'Agriculture / Natural resources, environment and climate / Soil management'.

Recycled water is treated to a high standard, but is not for drinking.

Care for the soil

- Nearly any type of soil can be improved by adding well rotted organics such as compost or manure.
- A thick layer of mulch – not too close to the stems of plants and trunks of trees – helps hold in moisture and protects the soil.
- Try to avoid using herbicides and pesticides as they can kill beneficial insects and soil organisms.
- Many soils in western Sydney are naturally prone to salinity. This can be made worse by water-logging, which can affect the growth or appearance of plants. As recycled water has a slightly higher chlorine and salt content, try not to overwater when using recycled water on potted plants or in your garden.

What is salinity?

Salinity occurs when salty groundwater rises close to the surface of the soil. The combination of excess salt and waterlogging of the soil can damage plants, as well as crack and damage roads, buildings and other structures.

There are several types of salinity. In urban areas, a number of factors can increase salinity in soils. This includes:

- the clearing of trees
- rainwater run-off from roads and buildings
- garden watering.

Learn more at:

www.environment.nsw.gov.au under Environmental issues / Soil degradation / Salinity.



Using a thick layer of mulch helps to protect the soil.

Right plant, right spot

Choosing the right plant for the right position will help ensure that your garden is healthy and productive. Check the plant label for information about how much water, sun, shade and protection your plant will need.

Ask other gardeners and your local garden centre or nursery for advice on what to plant. If you are new to the area, walk around the neighbourhood and see what grows well.

You can also use our plant selector tool to help choose plants suited to your local soil and weather conditions. Find it at sydneywater.com.au under Your home / Saving water at home / Garden & pool / Choose the right plants.



Ask other gardeners or nursery in your local area for advice on what to plant.

Nutrients and fertilisers

Recycled water is saltier than drinking water, but easily meets the guidelines for garden watering and irrigation.

It has a little more phosphorus and nitrogen in it than drinking water. The slightly higher nutrient levels are beneficial to plant growth, which means you should be able to use less fertiliser.

Some plants, including certain acacias, grevilleas, banksias and proteas, are particularly sensitive to phosphorus. Be aware of what is happening in your garden. If a plant is struggling, it may need more or less fertiliser or a different watering regime. Seek advice from your local garden centre if your plants aren't doing well.

Did you know?

There is a high demand for recycled water in the afternoons and evenings on extremely hot days.

We encourage you to water your garden in the morning before the day heats up. This also helps your plants to cope with high temperatures during the day.



Recycled water has slightly higher nutrient levels than drinking water, which is beneficial to plant growth.

Watering

Most gardens will thrive on recycled water if the right watering methods are used.

- Weekly deep watering is better than daily light surface sprays to encourage deeper roots. Once a week is usually enough, except in very hot weather, or if the plants are newly established. Many native plants and drought tolerant non-native plants require very little watering once established.
- Group plants with similar watering requirements. When watering, aim for the roots not the leaves. This saves water and helps protect leaves from burning.
- Water in the early morning or evening. Watering in the middle of the day wastes water (due to evaporation), and increases the chance of leaf burn.

Water restrictions and water wise rules don't apply to residential recycled water areas at the time of writing, but please conserve recycled water - it's a valuable resource.

What is deep watering?

As a guide, if you are using a hand held hose, you should water each square metre of garden for no more than 30 seconds. For example this would be 50 minutes of watering if you have a 100 square metre garden.

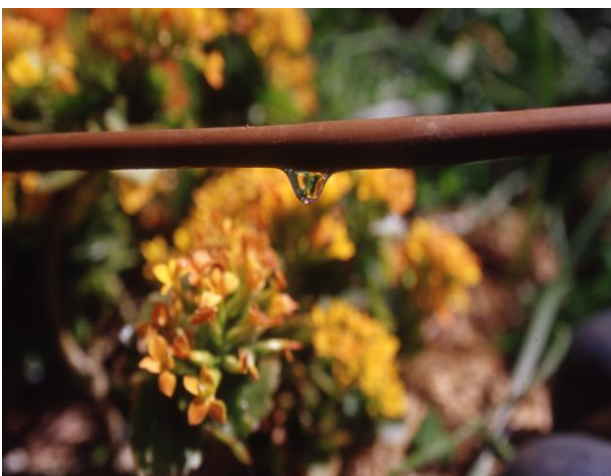
This will be enough to ensure deep watering to the root zone. Watering your plants any longer is most likely using more water than necessary.

The amount of water your garden needs will depend on your location, climate, plants and soil type.

Watering systems

As an effective watering system for your garden, we recommend fixed irrigation systems with drippers or sprays on short risers. They accurately deliver water to the roots of plants and help prevent run-off.

Your irrigation system may need backflow protection. Please ask a licensed plumber or an irrigation system specialist for advice.



Fixed irrigation systems with drippers help to deliver water directly to the roots of plants.

Quick tips

- Choose the right plants for your local conditions.
- Water in the cooler part of the day.
- Water the roots not the leaves.
- Water long and deep, once or twice a week.
- Don't over water or over fertilise.
- Improve the soil condition with mulch or compost.
- Respond to changes in your garden.
- Use recycled water as directed.
- Consult your local garden centre or nursery for advice if necessary.

Looking after the recycled water system

- Recycled water taps have removable handles – the handle should be taken off when the tap is not in use.
- Use the handle on the recycled water tap as supplied - don't replace it with a conventional handle.
- Check that the 'do not drink' sign is in place near your purple garden tap. You can buy replacements at most local hardware and plumbing supply shops.



Ensure the recycled water handle is removed when the tap is not in use.

To know more

For more information about recycled water or saving water in the garden in the Rouse Hill area:

Phone: 13 20 92

Visit: sydneywater.com.au under:

- Water & the environment / What we're doing / Recycling & reuse
- Your home / Saving water at home / Garden & pool.