

PARADISE LIMESTONE
BACKYARD RENOVATIONS · PERTH WA

GUIDE 01

Plants for Perth Gardens

Waterwise planting that actually thrives in our sand

FREE GUIDE

GUIDE 01

Planting in sand

Perth gives you long dry summers, mild wet winters and sand that water runs straight through. Plants that thrive in Melbourne or Sydney often sulk here. The good news is that the plants which do suit our conditions are tough, cheap to run and look after themselves once established.

This guide is mostly pictures. Find the plants you like the look of, check the notes, and you will end up with a garden that survives February.



A limestone wall with established waterwise planting. Structure first, then colour and groundcover to fill in.

Start with the soil

This is the step people skip, and it is the one that decides whether the rest works. Perth sand repels water once it dries out, so it can look watered on top while the root zone stays bone dry.



Wetting agent
Twice a year, spring and again mid summer. It lets water soak in instead of running off.



Compost and clay
Dig organic matter through the bed. It holds water and feeds the soil.



Mulch thickly
Coarse mulch, kept off the stems. The cheapest water saving you can buy.

Water rules

Perth has a permanent two day a week sprinkler roster, and the days depend on your address. Hand watering a new plant is allowed outside those days. Check the current roster with the Water Corporation before you plan a new garden.

Structure and feature plants

These carry the garden. Place them first, give them room, and let everything else fill in around them.



Bird of paradise

Bold leaves, orange flower. Tough and very Perth.



Agave attenuata

Sculptural, no spines, thrives on neglect.



Dwarf date palm

Resort feel without the size. Slow and tidy.



Olive

Silver foliage, handles heat and wind. Fruitless types available.



Frangipani

Summer flowers and scent. Drops its leaves in winter.



Bougainvillea

Huge colour on a hot wall. Needs hard pruning.

Giving them room

The most common planting mistake is crowding. Check the mature width on the label and space to that, not to how the plant looks in the pot. A bed looks sparse for one season and right for the next twenty. If you cannot bear the gaps, fill them with annuals or a pot you can move later.

Screening and hedging



A screening row does more for privacy than a taller fence, and it softens the boundary at the same time.



Westringia
Coastal native, clips like a hedge, handles salt.



Grevillea
Fast screen, flowers most of the year, brings birds.



Star jasmine
Climber or groundcover. Scented and neat.



Rosemary
Low hedge or spill over a wall. Thrives on dry.

Groundcovers, colour and grasses

Groundcover is what stops mulch blowing around and sand baking. Grasses give movement. Between them they do most of the work of making a bed look finished.



Lomandra
Fine strappy tussock. Almost indestructible.



Dianella
Blue flax lily. Handles shade and sun.



Kangaroo paw
WA icon. Full sun and good drainage.



Gazania
Hard wearing colour for hot dry edges.

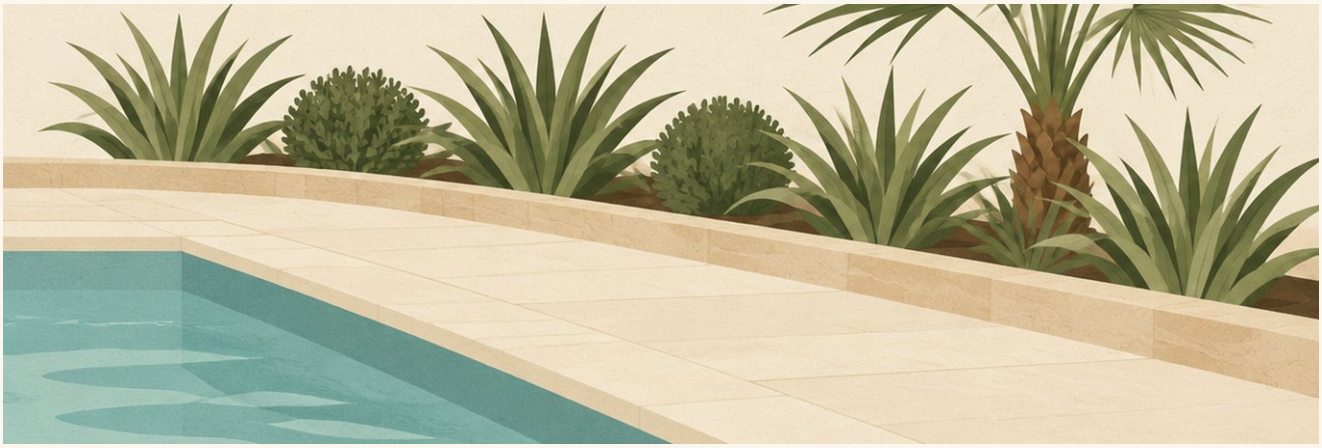


Lavender
Grey foliage and scent. Sun and sharp drainage.



Buffalo turf
The lawn that copes with Perth sun and kids.

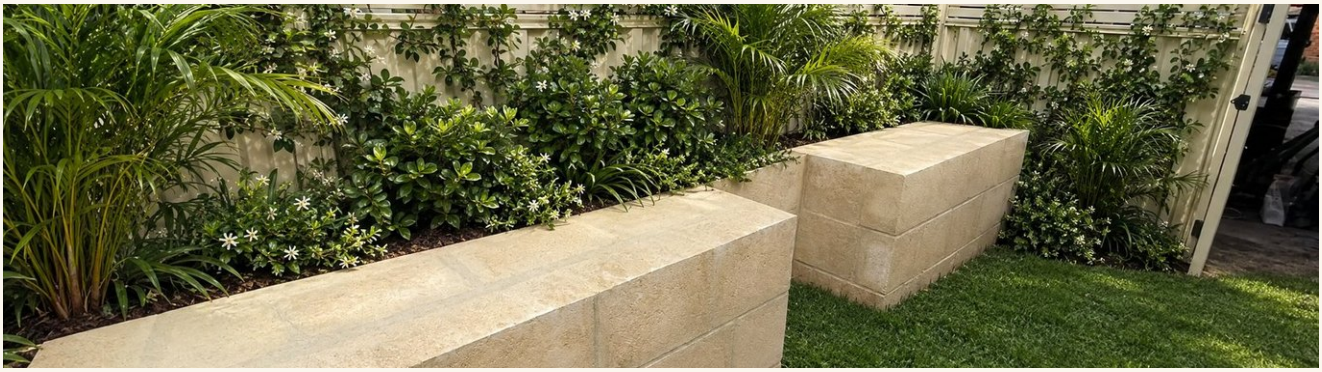
Planting beside the pool



Poolside beds work best kept low, tidy and low litter, so the skimmer basket is not a daily job.

- Pick low litter plants. Anything that constantly drops leaves or flowers ends up in the pool.
- Avoid aggressive roots near the shell, the paving and the plumbing.
- Expect splash out. Plants right on the edge cop chlorine or salt, so choose accordingly.
- Keep it low near the barrier. Nothing climbable within the safety zone of a pool fence.
- Strappy natives, succulents and small palms are the safe bets.

Planting near limestone walls



Planting softens a wall quickly. Keep the vigorous stuff at a distance and let low planting do the work at the base.

- Keep big trees well back. Roots lift footings and paving long before you see a problem above ground.
- Plant trailing species above a wall to spill over the face and break up the height.
- Leave a gap between the planting and the wall face so air moves and the stone stays dry.
- Run dripline rather than sprinklers near stone. Constant spray on limestone brings up staining.

When to plant

Timing matters more here than plant choice. Get it in the ground at the right time of year and it establishes on winter rain instead of on your reticulation.

Season	What to do	Why
Autumn	The best time to plant, by a long way.	Soil is still warm and winter rain is coming, so roots establish before summer.
Winter	Keep planting. Plan, prune and build beds.	Cool and wet. Almost no watering needed to get things going.
Spring	Feed, mulch and top up before the heat.	Growth is quick. Last safe window to plant, and only with follow up watering.
Summer	Hold off planting. Maintain what is there.	Anything new needs constant water to survive, and often does not.

Keeping it low maintenance



Pots let you have thirsty feature plants without committing the whole garden to them.

- Group plants by how much water they want, so one station is not drowning half the bed to keep the other half alive.
- Run dripline under mulch rather than sprinklers over the top. It puts water where the roots are.
- Mulch deeply and top it up each year as it breaks down.
- Plant at the density you want in two years, not the bare look of day one.

Common mistakes

- Planting in summer and hoping.
- Skipping the wetting agent, then wondering why watered sand is dry underneath.
- Thin mulch that blows away and bakes off by Christmas.
- Thirsty exotics scattered through a waterwise bed, so everything gets watered to suit the fussiest plant.
- Big trees planted too close to walls, paving and the pool.
- Buying on the flower at the nursery instead of the plant's final size.

A simple way to plan a bed

Work back to front and big to small. Put the structure plants in first and space them for their full size. Fill the middle with screening or flowering shrubs. Finish the front edge with groundcover and grasses so no bare mulch shows. Then mulch the lot and run dripline underneath.



Structure, middle layer and a planted edge, with the levels tied together by limestone.

Quick reference

Every plant in this guide, at a glance.

Plant	Where it works	Sun	Water
Bird of paradise	Feature, tropical look, courtyards	Full to part	Low to med
Agave attenuata	Feature, hot dry beds, pots	Full sun	Very low
Dwarf date palm	Feature, poolside, courtyards	Full to part	Low to med
Olive	Shade tree, screening, hot windy spots	Full sun	Very low
Frangipani	Feature, summer flower and scent	Full sun	Low
Bougainvillea	Hot walls, fences, big colour	Full sun	Very low
Westringia	Clipped hedge, coastal, salt air	Full sun	Low
Grevillea	Fast screen, native birds	Full sun	Low
Star jasmine	Climber or groundcover, scent	Full to part	Low to med
Rosemary	Low hedge, spills over walls	Full sun	Very low
Lomandra	Mass planting, edges, slopes	Full to part	Very low
Dianella	Beds, shaded spots, under trees	Full to part	Low
Kangaroo paw	Colour, natives, full sun beds	Full sun	Low
Gazania	Hot dry edges and verges	Full sun	Very low
Lavender	Borders, scent, Mediterranean beds	Full sun	Very low



Let's build your paradise

We build the bones of the garden, the walls, the paving and the beds, and we can plant it out for you as well. If you already have a planting list, bring it and we will tell you honestly what will struggle in your soil and aspect.

Aaron walks every site personally, and you get a straight answer on what your block actually needs.

Talk to Aaron

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