

LAWNS

KEY POINTS

You can still have a lawn even when water restrictions are severe

The grass must be suited to your climate and soil

For most areas, choose a warm-season grass

Prepare the soil thoroughly

When to establish a lawn

Watering lawns during drought

Effects of mowing and fertilisers on water use

Most Australian water supply authorities encourage home owners to reduce the amount of lawn they have. The main reason given is the fact that some of the water delivered to them via sprinklers is lost by evaporation as it flies through the air. Gardeners are encouraged to replace lawn with beds of other plants that can be watered via drippers. The assumption is that such beds will need less water than will a lawn. Is this factual?

One fact is that any area of **well-watered** plants – lawn or otherwise – will lose water at about the same rate under the same climatic conditions. When water supply is less, a lawn of deep-rooted, drought-tolerant grasses can have an acceptable appearance with no more

water than is needed by a bed of moderately drought-tolerant shrubs (see Table 10, p. 75).

A recent study found that average water applications per square metre to garden beds in Sydney were double those to lawn areas on the same property (see Table 22). There are no figures for other urban areas, but the difference will probably be less where summers are much drier than they usually are in Sydney.

But irrespective of these facts, the use of sprinklers on lawns is now widely banned across south-eastern Australia. In some areas there is either a total ban on watering lawns or they can be watered only by bucket or watering can, or via buried drippers.