

Planting Guide Jessica Rule

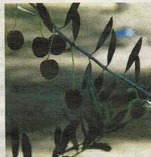


Smart thinking: This garden, by Naturescape Creative Landscaping, thrives in a coastal location because suitable plants were chosen.

Picture: Ian Mauro



Cottonwood



Olive



Mixed succulents



Rhaqodia baccata

Plant a garden worth its salt

Sun, wind and salt are givens for those lucky to live by the sea but gardeners beware. We ask the experts how to create a thriving garden in coastal areas.

Coastal gardens pose a unique set of challenges, from poor, sandy soils to salt pollution, plants taking a battering from sand-laden winds and salt build-up in soil and on foliage, which can cause leaf burn and stunting. "The challenge is building an outdoor sanctuary that can withstand," says landscape designer Neil Delmage, of Naturescape Creative Landscaping.

Here's how to ensure your coastal garden thrives.

PLANT SELECTION

Mother Nature has the best green thumb, according to Mr Delmage, so work with the seaside-loving and indigenous species that will

occur naturally in your garden.

"Many find it difficult to resist the temptation to plant exotic species that are not suited to the environment," he said. "However, a sustainable coastal garden need not compromise on style."

"Choose plants that are known to thrive in the area and look at neighbouring properties to see what is doing well."

Andrew Beck, of Sustainable Garden Designs, agreed that natives were the best bet for coastal landscapes, as they had evolved to adapt to the harsh WA conditions.

"Growing up in Perth, I was often struck by the beauty of the coastal heathlands surrounding City Beach, Swanbourne and Cottesloe, and also the ability of

the native species to thrive in the harshest of environments with the poorest of soils," he said.

Chris Ferreira, director of Landcare Solutions and co-founder of the Great Gardens program, said correctly chosen plants would thrive with little ongoing need for water or fertiliser.

"WA also has good waterwise nurseries that stock tough, hardy coastal plants," he said.

"Plants that are suitable for coastal planting will have it boldly displayed on their tag."

SOIL TLC

Giving soil a boost with compost, soil improver or soil conditioner will radically increase moisture

TIP:
"Great info on the right waterwise plants for the area can be gleaned from the Water Corporation website."
— Chris Ferreira



Strelitzia

Pictures: Naturescape, Domus Nursery, Benara Nurseries and Haughtly Culture

levels, help sandy soil hold nutrients and encourage soil micro fauna, according to Mr Delmage.

"Soil needs to be improved with organic matter, so don't reach for the fertiliser and extra water as it can do more harm than good," he said. "Spending money on soil improvement early will save you money in the long term."

PROTECTION FROM ELEMENTS
Haughtly Culture's Lorna Barnett said protecting plants from strong

and sand-laden winds was another important consideration. "Where protection from strong winds is required, it helps to use layered windbreaks of walls, trees and shrubs," she said.

"Walls and fences would only redirect the wind for a short distance, whereas vegetation would provide a filter."

Be realistic, said Mr Delmage. "If your garden is falling, start from scratch if it needs it and be prepared to pull out anything that isn't flourishing," he said.

The experts name their favourite species for coastal gardens

CAROL FUDGE, BEVARA NURSERIES

- **Cottonwoods** are a fast-growing tree that thrives in sandy soil on the sunny side of the garden — it will even grow in beach sand.

- Although not native, the **frangipani** copes well along the coast.
- **Rhaphiolepis**, or **Indian Hawthorn**, is hardy and tough, coping well with the salty winds.

- **Adenanthos**, or **Albany Woolly Bush**, is a tough West Australian native that thrives in sandy soils.

LORNA BARNETT, HAUGHTLY CULTURE

- I love *Strelitzia reginae* (**Bird of Paradise**) for its striking flowers against large green leaves.

- **Succulents** come in a fantastic array of colours, shapes and sizes — from the delicate *Echeveria elegans* for a pretty cottage garden to agaves and sansevierias for a more modern look.

- I recommend trees such as *Cupaniopsis anacardioides* (**tuckeroo**), a tough good-looking tree that loves poor soils, salt winds and pollution; *Olea europaea* (**olive**) has soft grey foliage that provides elegant dense screening; and *Agonis flexuosa variegata* (**variegated native peppermint**), a pretty tree with graceful, weeping light green and cream foliage.

CHRIS FERREIRA, LANDCARE SOLUTIONS

- For strength and sheer drought tenacity you can't go past *Encalypta tomentosa*: it is an amazing groundcover, as is *Grevillea crithmifolia*.
- Other low-lying plants include the show-stopper small shrub, *Pimelea rosea*, which has beautiful pink blossoms.

MARK TUCEK, DOMUS NURSERY

- **Rhaqodia baccata Seaberry Saltbush** is a fantastic native low-spreading coastal shrub one metre by two, which bears clusters of blood-red berries in summer.
- **Rosemary Roman Beauty** is an exotic dwarf compact variety with an unusual arching habit.

