This month with Water Wise

August is a tricky month in the garden - very strong winds, cold nights, and spikes in daytime temperature means that there is a good chance that your plants may take a beating. Don’t worry though, click here to get more tips on how to enjoy an August garden, as well as what you can look forward to if you were a successful winter gardener!

In summer rainfall regions there is a good chance that everything is looking a little dry. This is a great opportunity to practise your Water Wise skills - dam levels are slightly lower than average and we don’t expect more rain for another few weeks. Look after water and make sure you don’t use more than you actually need. Also, try using grey water (washing machine, bath and shower, and basin water) for activities that don’t require potable tap water, such as watering the garden, washing your car and hosing down your paving.

The news has been full of articles lately, regarding the water issues currently being experienced in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Water Wise looks at the current water situation there.

Also, we report back on the opening of Garden World’s Spring Festival, and the beautiful gardens that won this year. Have a great month!

Winner of the Water Wise Award at Garden World’s Spring Festival 2015

The theme at this year’s Garden World Spring Festival was ‘Nature’s Bounty’. The gardens this year were designed by the students of UNISA, Tshwane University of Technology, the horticulturists from Mogale City and also top landscapers in the green industry. The award for the most Water Wise professional garden was awarded to ‘Generous Earth’ by Sarah Vermaak. The most Water Wise young designers’ garden was ‘Parting with Nature’ by Maureen Madiseng (see image on page 4), and the award for most Water Wise Kiddies’ Garden went to Farmkidz.

This year’s gardens have shown incredible creativity and a vast understanding of a sustainable relationship between human activities and nature, embracing the meaning of ‘Nature’s Bounty’. Congratulations to all the winners.

Image below: ‘Generous Earth’ by Sarah Vermaak, winner of the Professional Gardens Water Wise Award. For more, go to page 4.
**Water in the News**

**Environmental degradation threatens health of future generations**

A report recently released by Discovery has indicated that environmental health issues such as climate change, ocean acidification, land degradation, water scarcity, over-exploitation of fisheries, and biodiversity loss are having a growing effect on human health. Three categories of challenges that have to be addressed were further identified in the report. Read more [here](#).

**Overworked sewerage plants in the Free State cause health concerns**

Municipal sewerage plants in the northern Free State have been running, in some cases, at over 200% capacity. This overextension has caused raw sewage to spill into rivers, streams and surrounding areas. Residents are reporting serious health complaints, as well as contamination of boreholes. Read more [here](#).

**Record heat worldwide in the first half of 2015**

The National Centers for Environmental Information in the USA have recorded global average temperatures between January and June 2015 that exceed any in history, making this the warmest first six months of a year on record. Record oceanic warmth was also documented within the northeastern and equatorial Pacific Ocean. For more on this global observation, click [here](#).

**Launch of new water information system by DWS**

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has launched the National Integrated Water Information System (NIWIS). This technology gives the public an opportunity to better understand the status of water in the country. Information accessible from this user-friendly system includes water quality, water use, water services available, regulations and waste water quality. The system will be available through personal computers, as well as mobile devices. For more information on how you can access the system, click [here](#).

**Water Wise Weather**

The Climate Prediction Centre in the USA has extended its El Niño outlook, with a projection of an 80 percent chance that the weather phenomenon will continue into the Northern Hemisphere’s early spring of 2016. This means that the Southern Hemisphere can expect to experience effects of El Niño well into our summer season next year.

The South African Weather Service forecasts a stronger probability of above-normal rainfall, more especially for the north-eastern parts of the country. In addition the system indicates generally above-normal temperatures across the country through late-winter towards mid-spring.

The minimum temperature in July at the Nursery was -6.9°C, with a high of 23.8°C and an average of 9.9°C. We received 12.2 mm in July.

The minimum temperature in July 2014 was -7.0°C, with a high of 24°C and an average of 9.72°C. No rain was received in July 2014.

The August winds seem to have started earlier than usual, and we hope that this is an indication of a good rainfall season this summer.

**Water Facts:**

- The Vaal Dam supplies water to approximately 20% of South Africa’s population.

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**Better, Smarter, Greener**
It has officially been declared that Kwa-Zulu Natal is ‘drought-stricken’. Amongst the worst affected by the drought are cattle-farmers, who have seen the death of more than 30 000 cattle to date. The current drought in the province has been identified as the worst since 1992, said Water and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane, and as a result the Department of Water and Sanitation have invested R 352 million into assisting the province with the crisis. This money will be used to drill boreholes where needed and to transport water to areas that require it.

There are plans to extend water restrictions to areas such as eThekwini Municipality. Previously, only the Lower South Coast, Illenbe District Municipality, Richards Bay and Umkhanyakude District Municipality had been identified for drought alerts and relief efforts.

The drought is thought to have been a result of low rainfall patterns and the effect of climate change, amongst other issues. People living in the affected areas have been encouraged to use water sparingly and to take heed of the water restrictions imposed in the selected regions.

Recent data has shown that Hazelmere Dam is currently at 26% capacity, putting residents along the northern coast at risk of water shortages too.

Residents within regions of Kwa-Zulu Natal have been asked to use water sparingly in the face of a severe drought.

Water shortages caused by the severe drought have caused The City of uMhlathuze to announce water cuts towards the end of July. The cuts are reported to be scheduled to take place daily from 27 to 31 July at 4am to 9am and 5pm to 10pm. During this time, residents in the area will be without water. For more on these cuts, please click on this [link](#).

### Current Dam Capacities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dam</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vaal Dam</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloemhof Dam</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grootdraai Dam</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sterkfontein Dam</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gariep Dam</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vaal Barrage Dam</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katse Dam</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*at time of writing

## Water Wise Events

This month at the Green Business Platform meeting, Nickey Janse van Rensburg will be giving a talk. The event is scheduled for 7 August at Thaba Eco Hotel, starting at 07:30 for 08:00. The charge is R 50 per person, which includes a light snack after the talk.

For more information on this event, contact the SOJO Offices at: 011 493 7880 or info@sojo.co.za or visit [www.klipsa.org.za](http://www.klipsa.org.za). Click [here](#) for past events, talks and presentations.

Water Wise is very busy this August! The main event will be held at Decorex Joburg between 6 and 10 August - we hope to see you at this enjoyable annual decor and design event at Gallagher Convention Centre.

The team will also be visiting SANA (South African Nursery Association) for the Gauteng Trade Fair in Knoppieslaagte on 12 August. This event allows growers and suppliers an opportunity to exhibit their products and services.

The 5th Regional African Water Leakage Summit will be held between 25 and 26 August in Midrand. Water Wise will be supporting Rand Water at this event with an informative display on water conservation.
More from Garden World’s Spring Festival

Days to remember:

09 August: 
National Women’s Day

09 August: 
International Day of the World’s Indigenous people

10 August: 
World Lion Day

12 August: 
World Elephant Day

12 August: 
International Youth Day

On 23 July, Garden World celebrated its 21st annual Spring Festival opening. The theme was ‘Nature’s Bounty’ and Mother Nature was surely listening to our pleas for water, as dark clouds threatened the chilly crowds at Garden World’s premises in Honeydew. Despite the cold, all the winners enthusiastically arrived to collect their prestigious awards and pose for photographs.

This year, the judging was tough, as the standard of gardens was very high. A total of seventeen designer gardens were entered into the competition, which showcases the work of professional landscapers, as well as young up-and-coming designers and students.

In an unlikely turn of events, there were two winners of the Professional Designers award this year. ‘From the Ashes’, designed by Praveer Sooka and constructed by Twilight Grove Design, was awarded the winner, alongside the ‘Tswana “tshimo” informative garden’, which was designed by Chris van Niekerk and constructed by North West University Botanical Garden.

The Young Designers award went to designer Victoria Ing, and the horticulture students from UNISA, who assisted with the construction and landscaping. Their garden, ‘Oh-Beehive’, was inspired by the honeybee and included an outdoor classroom.

Farm-Kidz received the Garden World Kiddies award for their lovely Water Wise garden. Well done to all designers - we look forward to next year!

Parting with Nature' by Maureen Madiseng - Young Designers WW winner.

‘From the Ashes’ by Praveer Sooka

‘Oh-Beehive’ by Victoria Ing

Do you have any interesting pictures of plants in your garden, or any comments or questions? If you do, please send them to us and we will include them in next month’s issue. We would love to hear from you! You can visit our website by going to www.randwater.co.za and clicking on the Water Wise logo. Alternatively, you can email us at waterwise@randwater.co.za or you can phone our call centre at 0860 10 10 60.