Water features

A water feature can add a wonderful focal point to any garden or landscape and encourages birds and insects. However, water features can also use and lose a lot of water. Use this guide to ensure your water feature is Water Wise.

Water features create tranquil, relaxing sights and sounds that add a dynamic focal point to gardens. However, an incorrectly designed and placed water feature can cause significant water losses. Follow these easy steps to ensure your water feature is Water Wise (Fig 1).

Water features the Water Wise way
- Aim for minimum size, with maximum effect and limited open pans of water.
- Plant water plants that cover the water surface area and reduce evaporation.
- Aim to locate water features in the shade to limit evaporation.
- Design/adjust to ensure that no splashing occurs.
- Swamp type plants cope well with filtering household waste water for example *Typha capensis* (Bulrush).
- When constructing a pond, use solid surface construction material, for example cement or glass fibre in preference to clay or soil that allows water to infiltrate through it, causing a water loss.

Fig 1. Note there is no splash and the water flows into a sump and is collected below the pebbles of this Water Wise water feature.

Owners of existing water features should assess their water features based on the following criteria and establish whether or not any alterations or management of the water feature could assist in reducing water loss.

How Water Wise is my pond/bog garden?
Answer the following questions to find out whether your water feature, or pond is Water Wise or not (Fig 2)?
- Does it leak i.e. Do you re-fill the pond with more water than is evaporated?
- Does it splash water?
- Is it placed away from a focal area at the back of the house, where the effect is lost?
- Does it only use tap water or does run-off rainwater also collect into it?
- Is it only large and very shallow (30 cm) or does it have some good, deep areas with reduced surface area? (Reducing the surface area reduces evaporation.)
- Is it partially shaded or in the shade to reduce evaporation?

Fig 2. A Water Wise pond.

Tips to ensure your water feature does not waste water:
- Fountains with a fine spray or high pressure waterfalls lose a lot of water due to evaporation. Choose fountains with coarse droplets that help reduce atomisation, thereby reducing evaporation.
- Check the level of your pond daily to see if it drops dramatically, and if so check for leaks.
- If your water feature is placed in an area of high wind, this will increase evaporation.
- Check old ponds manufactured of concrete regularly for cracks and leaks.
- Plant water plants that cover the water surface area and reduce evaporation.
- Place one water feature strategically in a focal area to get the greatest effect rather than several scattered around the garden.
- Avoid water features that require a continuous supply of new water. Aim rather for self-contained, re-circulating water. For example, avoid the dripping tap type feature that drains into the landscape.
- Dark pigment colours on the inside of water features cause temperatures to rise and encourage evaporation.

Remember that a Water Wise water feature is one where the water falls into a pool below that is 1.5 m wider than the height of the fall of the water. This will prevent water from being splashed out of the collecting pool. Also, install a timer into your water feature so that it only operates when necessary. The sound of soft rippling water is much more calming and relaxing than that of a high gusher.

For further information on being Water Wise please visit [www.randwater.co.za](http://www.randwater.co.za) and click on the Water Wise logo or contact us on 0860 10 10 60.