Gardeners use about two-thirds of the domestic water supply during hot dry spells. This huge demand is hard to sustain in a drought so, not surprisingly, water companies encourage gardeners to do their bit to help reduce their usage. Thankfully it is possible to have a beautiful garden and still be water wise.

Choosing the right plants to cope with dry conditions is a great place to start and it need not be daunting or costly. We’ve created a handy guide to get you started...

**SMALL PLANTS** (up to 60cm tall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Spread</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alchemilla mollis (lady’s mantle)</td>
<td>60cm S: 75cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceratostigma plumbaginoides (SH)</td>
<td>45cm S: 30cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavandula angustifolia ‘Hidcote’ (lavender)</td>
<td>60cm S: 30cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavandula angustifolia Melissa Lilac (‘Dow4’) (lavender)</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>60cm S: 75cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavandula angustifolia ‘Munstead’ (lavender)</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>45cm S: 60cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SMALL PLANTS** (up to 60cm tall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Spread</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salvia nemorosa ‘Amethyst’</td>
<td>HP</td>
<td>60cm S: 50cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvia nemorosa ‘Ostfriesland’</td>
<td>HP</td>
<td>60cm S: 50cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedum spectabile (Brilliant Group) ‘Brilliant’</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>65cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stachys byzantina (lamb’s ears)</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>65cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stipa tenuissima (pony tails grass)</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>60cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MEDIUM-SIZE PLANTS** (up to 1.8m tall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Spread</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Echinacea purpurea ‘Magnus’ (coneflower)</td>
<td>HP</td>
<td>1m S: 45cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erysimum ‘Bowles’s Mauve’ (wallflower)</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>75cm S: 60cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepeta ‘Six Hills Giant’ (cat mint)</td>
<td>HP</td>
<td>90cm S: 60cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perovskia ‘Blue Spire’ (Russian sage)</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>1.2m S: 1m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phlomis fruticosa</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1m S: 1.5m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MEDIUM-SIZE PLANTS (up to 1.8m tall)

Potentilla fruticosa
‘Primrose Beauty’
SH
H: 90cm S: 1.5m

Rosmarinus officinalis
‘Miss Jessopp’s Upright’ (rosemary)
SH
H: 1.5m S: 1.2m

Salvia officinalis ‘Purpurescens’ (purple sage)
SH
H: 80cm S: 1.7m

Skimmia japonica subsp. reevesiana
SH
H: 1.2m S: 90cm

TALL PLANTS (over 1.8m tall)

Choisya ternata (Mexican orange blossom)
SH
H&S: 2.4m

Cotinus coggygria ‘Royal Purple’
SH
H&S: 3m

Sarcococca confusa (Christmas box)
SH
H: 2m S: 1.5m

Stipa gigantea (ornamental grass)
P
H: 2.4m S: 1.2m

Trachelospermum jasminoides
C
H: 4m S: 4m

Verbena bonariensis
P
H: 2m S: 0.65m

Cool Characteristics

When selecting plants that can handle the heat, there are also some general cool characteristics that you can keep an eye out for:

- Aromatic leaves contain volatile scented compounds that are thought to cool foliage as they evaporate, reducing water loss.
- Fleshy, succulent leaves store moisture for dry spells.
- Grey leaves usually signify drought resistance.
- Hairy leaves shade themselves with their own hairs.
- Leathery foliage loses less water than soft leaves.
- Long, narrow leaves are very good at shedding heat without losing water.
- Small leaves shed heat and have few pores from which to lose water.
- Spikes act as ‘fins’ that cool the plant.

WHAT NEXT...

To give your plants the best chance to establish and survive, aim to:

- Improve the soil with well-rotted compost or manure, because it holds on to moisture and reduces the need to water.
- Tease out any roots circling around the edge of the plant’s rootball. This will help the roots to grow out into the soil.
- Dig a hole and place the plant in. Next, fill the hole with water until at least a watering-can-full has soaked in.
- New plants need watering well once a week (twice a week in dry, hot spells) to survive.
- As new plants require regular watering, collect rainwater and grey water to reduce the demand on the mains supply.

Key to symbols:

HP = Herbaceous perennial
SH = Shrub
P = Perennial
C = Climber
H = Height
S = Spread

= plant has RHS Award of Garden Merit
= RHS Perfect for Pollinators attracts insects
Sunny
Semi-Shade
Shade

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