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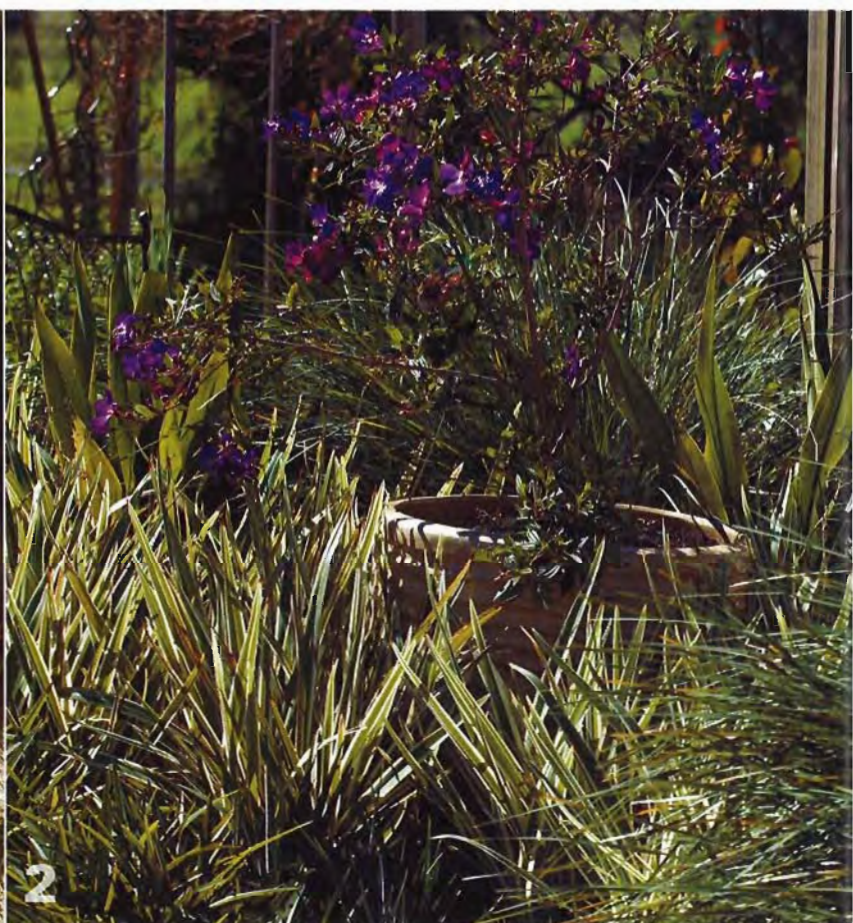
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grassed off



Turn your garden over to nature. Plant these grasses and let it look after itself

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Water restrictions have prompted a whole new approach to Australian garden design in the last few years. And in rethinking the plants we grow, some brilliant low-water alternatives have emerged, such as ornamental grasses.

You can create a whole garden just out of grassy plants. The beauty of long tufts of foliage – soft and cascading or upright and spiky – offers all sorts of potential for landscaping attractive garden scenes. By combining different foliage tones, textures and heights, grassy plants will let you create wonderful layered beds.

And there's more than the foliage on offer. Many grass species offer attractive seed heads, while other strappy-leaved plants, such as liriopie or dianella, produce subtle flowers in season.

1 Pennistenum 'Purple Lea' is a non-invasive native form of fountain grass, with wonderful feathery flower heads.

2 To add extra colour to a grassy garden, throw in a flowering shrub. A tibouchina in a tub works perfectly.

3 Tulbaghia, or society garlic, makes beautiful edging for grassy gardens, with the added bonus of pink flowers on tall stems.



Waterwise gardening at its best





What's in a name?

Not all the plants we refer to as 'grasses' actually belong to the true grass family (*Gramineae*). Dianella and mondo grass, for example, are actually members of the lily family. In landscaping terms, plant species with thin strappy foliage are generically referred to as 'ornamental grasses'.

Give your pathside garden a makeover

Garden beds beside driveways and paths need tough plantings which maintain their good looks without too much TLC. So a hardy combination of grasses which can survive just on natural rainfall is a great low-maintenance planting scheme. To create some shape and a contrast of colours, combine at least two different species, like in the makeover above.

1 Before, a hedge of dwarf English box was struggling to survive in this sunny garden bed, especially during those prolonged summer droughts.

2 After removing the hedge, a narrow trench was dug along the edge of the path and filled with gravel to prevent soil washing onto the path.

3 Two dianella species – 'Little Jess' and 'Cassa Blue' – were then planted for their contrasting foliage. The result is a streamlined and stylish look.

How to design a grassy garden

Grasses and strappy-leaved plants maintain their good looks all year round, so they're the perfect subjects for low-maintenance garden designs. You can use them on their own or mix them with other waterwise species.

- Grassy plants vary from small mounding types through to tall fountains of foliage. So use them to create mixed garden beds by planting tall, medium and low varieties in layers.
- Edge paths with grasses for an easy-care foliage bed.
- Change the look of existing shrub beds by planting an edging border of dwarf grasses. Use just one species for a uniform look, such as mondo grass or *Dianella* 'Cassa Blue'.
- Plant a variety of grass species in colourful glazed containers, and place them as features near front doors.

For shopping details, see Stockists page



Maintenance tips

Easy feed Grasses and grass-like plants will thrive without any additional feeding. But just to get them off on the right foot, apply a sprinkling of slow-release fertiliser at planting. You will get faster, denser growth.

Trim for spring The true grasses, like *Poa* species, can be cut back quite severely in late winter. This removes the old, dead stalks from the clump and makes way for a vigorous flush of new growth.

Pots of grass

If you're searching for indestructible container plants, grasses are the answer. Fine-leaved *Lomandra* 'Tanika' (pictured above) makes a fabulous subject for a tall, glazed feature pot. It will tolerate irregular watering, full sun and shade. The main requirement is good drainage, so use a top-quality free-draining potting mix.

TIP: For a quick fix, sit a pot of grass inside a larger container, propped up on bricks.

You can create a tranquil garden of graceful, swaying, colourful foliage



Delicious dianellas

Dianellas are Australian plants with grass-like leaves that are resilient and beautiful. They'll grow in sun or shade and maintain their good looks with scant attention. And there are some great new varieties available:

- 1 Dianella 'Tasred' has broader leaves which are tinged with red during the cooler months.
- 2 Dianella 'Little Rev' is neat and compact with upright pointy leaves.
- 3 Dianella 'Silver Streak' has pale green leaves edged with white – great for foliage contrast.
- 4 Dianella 'Little Jess' is a compact grower with bright green foliage.
- 5 Dianella 'Cassa Blue' is a cute dwarf form with distinctly blue foliage.