



# LAND FOR WILDLIFE

CENTRAL AUSTRALIA  
Hosted by Low Ecological Services P/L



## Are You Over-watering Your Garden?

Alkalinity is often a problem in arid gardens, which can be encouraged by over-watering your garden. Let's get real about where we live and what our expectations ought to be for our gardens and outdoor spaces. As the weather warms up, we encourage gardeners to remain conscious about their water consumption (for the environment and the pH of their soil).

Remember that Alice Springs town water has dissolved calcium carbonate and salt in it. Pouring this onto your soil will (overtime) increase the presence of these minerals in the soil, increasing the alkalinity. To counteract alkalinity in the soil when planting a tube stock, Geoff Miers suggests, planting a tube stock with other fertiliser and potting mix (making the soil slightly acidic). This will counteract the effects from initial watering. This may be as regular as an hour a day, with a 4/L dripper for 1-2 weeks. Then switch to watering every 3-4 days, then every 4-5 days for up to 3-4hrs. Of course there is no set recipe for watering, though it's important to move towards a regime of watering deeply and less frequently.

Establishing plants in this way will encourage roots to move deep into the soil, rather than remaining near the surface where roots are more susceptible to stress from warm weather. This strategy will help them to be resilient throughout the seasons and less dependent on any regular water regime. Once native plants have established and survived a few seasons, a watering regime may consist of only four deep, long (8hr) soaks per year (August, November, February and May).

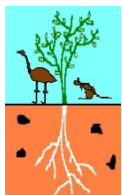
Of course, cultivating a native garden with plants local to the region will provide you with a low maintenance garden in the long term and require very little water once established. Remember, although particular plants such as frangipani and bougainvillea may produce aesthetically pleasing displays of flowers, the truth is, those plants have not adapted to the arid conditions and so will always require extra attention (frost protection, watering etc.). Why waste that energy on ornamental varieties when you can plant natives and offer habitat and potential food sources to native wildlife too!

If you suspect your soil may have an alkaline imbalance, you can check by buying a pH test kit from all terrific gardening shops in Alice. Ideally, you need to keep your soil at 7-7.5pH for ideal plant growing conditions. If the pH is over 8.5 it is probably too acidic for most plants to grow well (Forth & Vinter, 2007).

**For more information about strategic watering of native gardens check out the Central Australian water wise garden brochure by PowerWater.**

Forth, F. & Vinter, A. (2007). Native plants for central Australian gardens. Greening Australia.

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**Land for Wildlife & Garden for Wildlife**  
**Central Australia**

*Hosted by Low Ecological Services P/L*

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