

Wicking Gardens for drought, or small sections

Wicking gardens are good in a drought because they use roughly half as much water as a normal garden where you water from above, and the plants roots stay near the surface. In this system the roots head down to the water and mulch on top of the soil prevents evaporation.

They are also good in a small section where there is some flat land, eg concrete or gravel, corner of the deck, lawn etc where you can place the container in a sunny spot. They don't have to go where the good garden soil is, but do need somewhere flat for even water uptake.

You can make them from any container that is water tight (no holes in the base) at least 30cm high, and strong enough to load up with soil. If you have mosquitos in your area put mesh over the inlet pipe and overflow hole.



You will need a \$30 for the 100-litre container, \$8 for the geotech fabric, and the river sand, compost, old flowerpots and piece of hose pipe.

Step one. The small wicking garden on the picture is made with a 100 litre black plastic container from the Warehouse. The water in the base is to find a level place on the concrete, and the pipe placed diagonally across the bottom.

Step two. Collect enough empty flower pots to cover the bottom. Four of them will be filled with river sand and upright, and all the rest are upside down to create the base section that holds the water.

Step three. Put a layer of geotech fabric, or double thickness of plastic windbreak material on top of the flowerpot base, and up the sides. Put 2cm of river sand on top of the geotech fabric.



Step four. Drill a hole in the side of the container, at the opposite corner from where the pipe ends, just above the level of the fabric. This is the overflow point.

Step five. Add at least 15cm of soil or compost. The vegetable roots will grow down to the water, which will wick up through the river sand in the pots, through the geotech and river sand to the soil. Pour water down the pipe until it comes out the overflow hole. Water from above at the start, so when you plant the seedlings, the soil is damp.



Stage 6. Plant your seedlings. In this case 2 small green cabbages, 2 red cabbages and 2 cavolo nero. The white butterflies were still around so a temporary insect net was set up.

Three weeks later they have grown well. The container has been dragged to a sunnier place 2m from the wall.

