

# TAPPED IN

Bringing you news, updates and information from Watercare

Spring 2022



Mark (left) and Gene use strategically-placed barrels and buckets to capture rainwater for their garden.

## Grow with H<sub>2</sub>O

**Spring has sprung! The flowers are blooming, and days are getting longer. It's a great time to get outdoors and into the garden. Water may be plentiful now but please use it wisely as summer approaches.**

The warmer months ahead offer perfect conditions for designing or maintaining a garden. Often, this is the time when dormant plants grow again and new seedlings sprout out of the ground. Planting now will give plants time to establish their roots in time for summer.

But before you start creating a garden, choose plants that do well in Auckland conditions. For example, selecting drought-resistant plants will play a huge part in keeping gardens alive and sustainable.

When planting, make sure the soil is nutrient-rich and retains water well. Adding compost or mulch can improve the soil's ability to absorb and hold water.

Whether you're maintaining an existing garden or creating a patch from scratch, it's important to be mindful of your water use. While we've had a wet winter, the temperatures will rise as we approach the summer months. This means nurturing a water-efficient garden throughout the year is key.

In this edition of *Tapped In*, landscaper Mark van Kaathoven and his husband, Gene, provide tips on how to keep your garden lush while keeping your water bill low. You can also learn how to grow your own edible garden – with step-by-step instructions on how to grow carrots.



Visit [waterforlife.org.nz/grow-with-h2o](https://waterforlife.org.nz/grow-with-h2o) to learn more about how to make your garden water-efficient.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The traditional Māori lunar calendar, Maramataka, was used to guide the planting and harvesting of crops, and fishing and hunting.

According to the Maramataka – which translates as 'moon cycle' – in Mahuru (September), the weather is becoming warm and plants are beginning to grow again.

It is time to prepare the garden for planting and explore the world of plants by planting some of your favourite vegetables.

# An inner-city oasis where water conservation is key

**Using water wisely is more than a summer fling for Mark van Kaathoven – it's a way of life.**

The landscaper uses ingenious methods to make the most of every drop, both inside and outside the house.

He and husband, Gene Dillman, have turned their property into an inner-city oasis of greenery which continues to flourish even in hot, dry weather, thanks to their lifelong understanding of water's preciousness, combined with some creative water conservation.

Some of the methods they use to keep their multi-layered garden hydrated include:



Setting up barrels and bins strategically around the property to catch rainwater and roof run-off.



Rearranging downpipes on their house (with the aid of an understanding plumber) to direct water from the roof into the vessel of their choice. They have different lengths of pipe to reach different barrels.



Building a pipe to run through the garden to a place where it keeps the water table topped up, keeping plants thriving in the summer heat.



Using a small, submersible pump which they put into the water barrels and connect to their hose so they can water the garden from different locations without connecting to the mains.



Creating dams in the guttering from the roof to direct the water flow where they want it to go.



Reusing their grey water from the house up to three times – washing the breakfast dishes and lunch dishes in the same water before putting it on the garden. They also collect their shower water and use it to flush the toilet and water the garden.



Using all garden clippings as mulch to provide food for the plants.



Choosing the right kinds of plants that don't need a lot of water. Species like bromeliads hold their own water and nikau palms create funnels that trap water.

They have seen a huge decrease in water costs by not watering their garden from the mains. They are using the amount of water one person would use, rather than two.

Mark also plants public verges in his street and Hepburn Street, and works with the Freemans Bay Residents' Association, supervising the planting of gardens at the nearby Waitarau/ Freemans Bay Reserve with the help of the community, where he has turned offcuts from stormwater pipes being laid in the area into planters.

He received a Good Citizens' Award from the Waitemata Local Board for his park restoration work, which will also be commemorated on a sign planned for the reserve.

Meanwhile, his personal garden is so impressive that it has been named a 5-star garden by the New Zealand Gardens Trust, alongside the likes of Auckland Botanic Gardens, Cornwall Park and Auckland Domain Wintergardens. Mark says it's a huge honour to be recognised by the trust and included on its website, [www.gardens.org.nz](http://www.gardens.org.nz). The garden is listed as The Urban Jungle and includes details of how people can book tours to see the waterwise garden in action.

Visit [waterforlife.org.nz/water-conservation](http://waterforlife.org.nz/water-conservation) to find out more information.

## Top tips for watering plants



### Collect shower water

Put a couple of buckets in the bottom of your shower while the water is heating up. Save these to water your plants every day.



### Save your cooking water

If you steam or boil vegetables, save the water rather than tipping it down the sink. It is full of nutrients and, when cooled, makes a free fertiliser for watering your plants.



### Reuse water from your fish tank or dehumidifier

When you clean your fish tank, use the water on your plants – but remember that some plants cannot deal with water softeners and harsh detergents, and avoid the vegetable patch. You can also reuse water from your dehumidifier on your indoor plants.





## Growing edible plants can improve the biodiversity of your garden, help you save money and provide fresh, healthy food.

There is a variety of edibles you can select from and different methods for planting. You can choose from vegetable seedlings in punnets which can be planted straight into the garden, or directly sow seeds straight into your garden. Auckland Botanic Gardens recommend that peas, beans, sweetcorn, coriander and beetroot are better grown from seed.

While different vegetables suit different times of the year, the main planting time for a summer edible garden is late October/November. You can also consider planting a herb garden. Mediterranean herbs like rosemary, thyme and oregano are very hardy and need less watering than vegetables.

Here are some top tips for growing edibles:

- Plant in a sunny, sheltered site of your garden
- Work compost into the soil at the time of planting
- Apply a general fertiliser to the soil and rake it in
- Protect plants from slugs and snails.

For more information, visit the [Auckland Botanic Gardens website](https://www.aucklandbotanicgardens.org.nz/) to use their plant finder tool.

## How to grow carrots

Carrots seeds can be sowed in autumn, winter and spring in Tāmaki Makaurau. They are fun to grow and are usually ready to be harvested in 50 to 65 days.

### Equipment needed:

- Fresh carrot seeds
- Potting mix
- Containers at least 30cm deep
- Water

### Grow

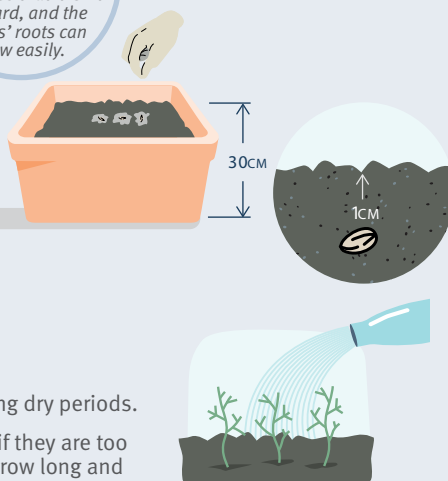
- 1 Fill the container with potting mix at least 30cm deep.
- 2 Place the seeds 3cm apart in the containers.
- 3 Cover with potting mix that is 1cm deep.
- 4 Water.

**Tip for growing carrots in your garden.**

Pick a sunny spot that has free-draining soil. You will need to dig up the soil so that it isn't too hard, and the carrots' roots can grow easily.

**Top tip**

If there is any water left in your drink bottle at the end of the day, you could pour it on your carrot plants

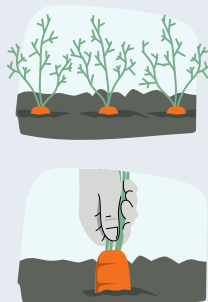


### Nurture

- 1 Water your carrots regularly, particularly during dry periods.
- 2 When the seeds start to grow, pull some out if they are too close together. This will ensure your carrots grow long and straight. You want there to be at least 5cm between each plant.

### Harvest

- 1 Water the carrots so that the soil is moist. This will make it easier to pull them up. If the soil is dry, the carrots may snap as you pull them up.
- 2 When the carrots are ready to be harvested, you will see the orange tops poking up out of the soil. Hold the carrots at the base of the stalk and gently pull upwards.



Visit [waterforlife.org.nz/kids-stuff](https://www.waterforlife.org.nz/kids-stuff) to view the activity sheet.



Our team at the Māngere Wastewater Treatment Plant transformed an unused courtyard area into a lush garden using recycled materials and offcuts from pipes. The flourishing veggie garden has since housed spinach, courgettes, rocket, cos lettuce, basil, fennel, chilli and a wide variety of tomatoes.



# Sign up to get your monthly bill delivered by email for a chance to win 1 of 10 gift cards.

## Sign up in two easy steps:

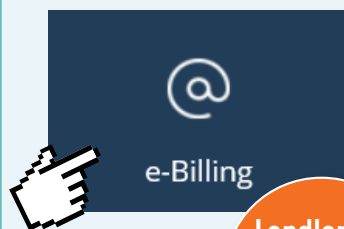
### 1 Register for MyAccount

Visit [watercare.co.nz/CreateAccount](https://watercare.co.nz/CreateAccount) to set up an online account.



### 2 Sign up for e-billing

Once you've logged in to MyAccount, select 'e-Billing' in the top bar. Find your account and select 'Update details' on the right and opt in for e-Billing.



**Landlords:**  
Your tenants can receive their bills by email too!



If you sign up to email bills this month, you'll automatically go in the draw to win one of 10 gift cards!

See online for terms and conditions.  
Visit [watercare.co.nz/ebilling](https://watercare.co.nz/ebilling) for more information.

## Working with local communities

Community gardens offer a number of benefits, from improving the environment and the health and wellbeing of the community, to increasing access to fresh produce and supporting local businesses.

At our Central Interceptor office, we're pleased to support the Grow Space Morningside Urban Market Garden (MUMG) initiative. In a small area of the stadium grounds, the MUMG has transformed the space with 32 garden beds, growing an assortment of delicious vegetables. We've provided a greenhouse, watering system and raised garden beds as part of the initiative.

Not only does the MUMG provide fresh produce to local cafés and businesses, it also offers an opportunity for migrant and refugee women to develop new gardening and business skills. The Grow Space group is now developing the Morningside Urban Compost Kitchen (MUCK) in a separate area nearby, with long garden beds and a compost hub.

If you are interested in getting involved with this initiative, visit [growspace.org.nz](https://growspace.org.nz) for more information.



## KEEP IN TOUCH

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