Reducing Hard Surfaces

Hard surfaces such as roofs, walls, walkways and paths, driveways and roads soak up heat and cause moisture in the soil to evaporate more quickly.

Locating trees and other vegetation, covered pergolas and shade structures will create shade that will cool the surrounding landscape and provide protection from harsh summer sun. Selecting appropriate hard surface materials, such as reconstituted sandstone paving rather than concrete is essential.

Many hard surfaces direct rain water into the storm water system which unfortunately washes pollution and rubbish into our water ways and leaves our garden bereft of the benefits of rainfall. When designing hard surfaces, rain water should be directed on to garden areas where possible or collected in tank for garden use. Garden beds should also be constructed to retain maximum water – if beds are ripped and are at or below paving level, water can flow into them and replenish soil moisture.

Green roofs and green walls are becoming more popular and significantly improve a buildings insulation while providing valuable green spaces. Gardens created on roof tops and vertical walls are fast becoming a means of cooling down urban landscapes.

Increasing Shade in the Garden

Planting trees that are drought and frost hardy on the North, North West and Western sides of a garden will provide summer shade outdoors. If walls and the roof of a building are shaded with plants or shade structures, thermal comfort indoors will be improved

Planted or covered paths and walkways provide shade and shelter

create cool zones or mini oasis

Using passive cooling techniques such as a vine covered pergola or water rill will assist in cooling an outdoor space.

Creating courtyards, particularly closely spaced multi storey buildings, that incorporate shade structures and water features for evaporative cooling (such as a fountain) and have permeable ground surface treatment, significantly reduce the need for air conditioning.

Simple techniques such as grouping higher water use plants together on the South, South East or East will reduce the amount of water required to sustain them.

Planting wind breaks will protect from prevailing winds creating a more user friendly outdoor space and will reduce evaporation caused by drying winds.

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