



Respiratory Care WA

Asthma | COPD | Respiratory Health



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36 Ord Street, West Perth, WA, 6005



respiratorycarewa.org.au

Low Allergen Garden

Asthma, hayfever and dermatitis

Asthma, hayfever and dermatitis can all be triggered by plants. It is important when planning a garden or replacing plants that this is taken into account. Some plants may not necessarily trigger asthma but can cause dermatitis or hayfever.

Gardening without tears

The months from August through to March can be difficult for people with asthma or hayfever. This is the time when pollen counts are at their highest. People with asthma who are sensitive to pollens also dread this time of year as the increase in airborne pollens can bring about an increase in their asthma symptoms.

Plants distribute their pollen in two ways. Some plants produce small amounts of pollen which are carried by birds or insects, while other plants produce masses of tiny pollen which are carried by the wind. It is the windborne pollens that can cause most of the problems for people who have asthma or hayfever.

The plants which trouble us most are often found in our own gardens. Windborne pollen usually lands very near the plant that it has originated from. However, some pollens can be carried considerable distances, overriding our efforts to achieve a low-allergen garden! It is important to reduce triggers in our local environment, but it is also important to remember that neighbouring properties can also cause some problems.

Planning and planting a low allergen garden can improve your quality of life, especially if you enjoy gardening.

What is a low allergen garden?

The low allergen garden is a garden which excludes plants that are likely to provoke asthma or hayfever.



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Helpful tips

- Choose bird or insect pollinated plants rather than wind pollinated.
- Where possible, increase the garden area and replace lawns with paved areas. Lawns trap pollens which are released when the lawn is mowed. Mow regularly to prevent seed formation or choose a low pollen producing, slow growing lawn that requires minimal mowing. Dampening the lawn can sometimes help.
- Eliminate weeds as they are wind pollinated plants. These are excluded by either gravel/scoria mulches or carpets of ground cover.
- Exclude hedges as they hold dust and pollen which is released when the hedges are trimmed. Use lattice for fencing and trellis low allergy creepers.
- Exclude organic mulches as they break down and produce mould and fungal spores. Inorganic mulches such as gravel or scoria may be a better option. Avoid compost heaps, again due to the prevalence of mould.
- Avoid being in your garden on hot still days or very windy days, as this is when pollen is usually released. Reserve your gardening for cool cloudy days or in the early morning when the dew is on the ground.
- Choose lightly scented plants.
- Don't hang out washing on windy or hot days as pollens and moulds can stick to the clothing.
- Wear appropriate protective clothing i.e. gloves, face mask, eye protection.
- Avoid the use of fountains or spray sprinkler systems, as these can make spores/pollens airborne. In regard to pollens in general, a dangerous time can be after light rains in spring/early summer when some pollen grains break up and release large amounts of tiny allergic particles. Light spray type watering in high pollen conditions also has the potential to create a similar effect. Dripper systems are preferable.
- Thoroughly moisten potting mix prior to use to avoid mould spores becoming airborne and wash hands thoroughly after exposure.
- Discuss the low allergy garden concept with your neighbours.
- Always use your preventer and reliever medication as directed and have your reliever medication with you whilst you garden.