

# WATER CONSERVATION GARDEN

## In Central Otago, gardens use a very high proportion of all household water.

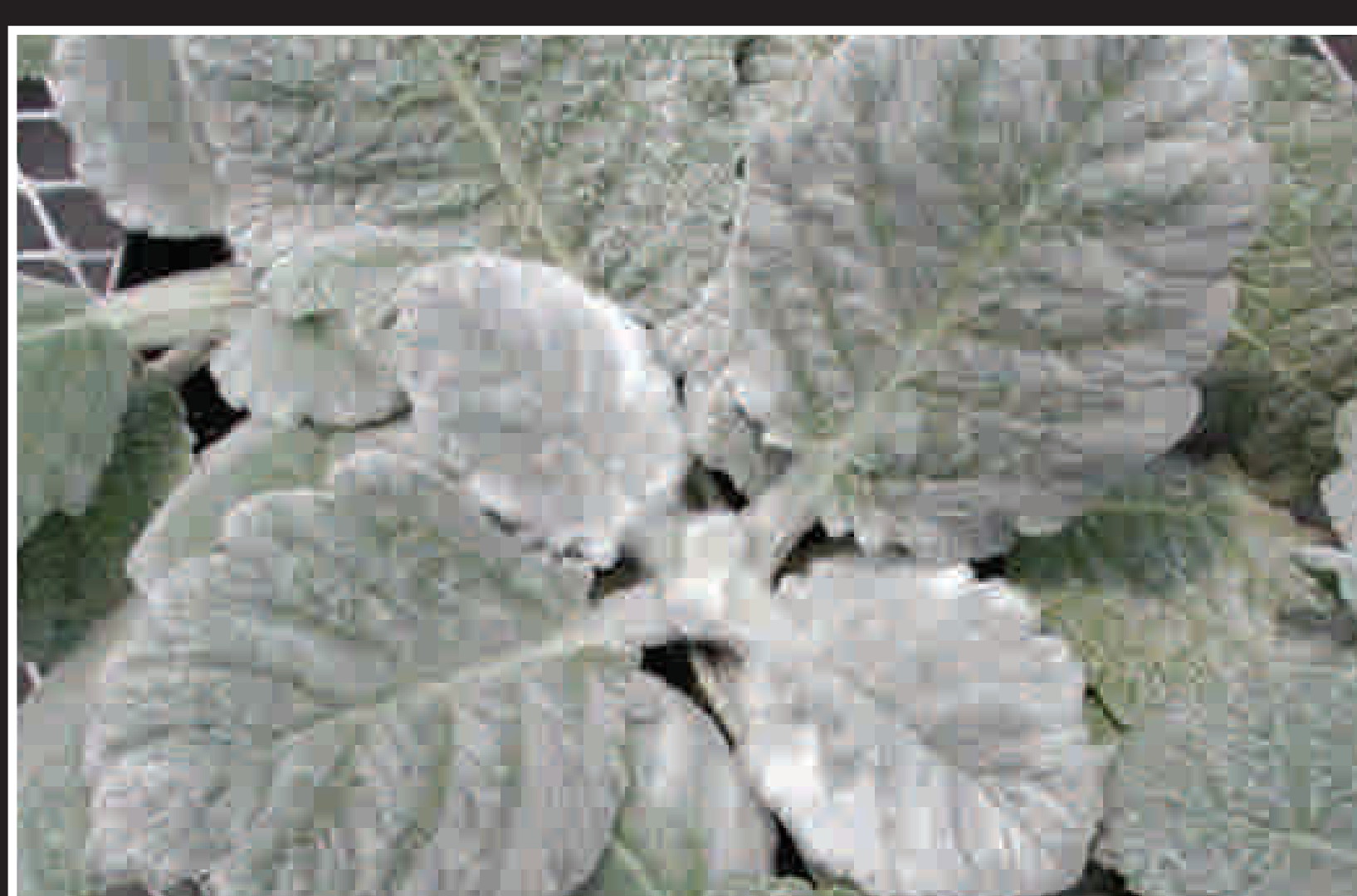
With our ongoing desire to green up our lawns and gardens, it is not surprising that Cromwell's water consumption increases by up to 600% over the summer.

Each drop we use on our gardens is water treated for human consumption and this comes at a cost. With increasing pressure on water resources and infrastructure we need to consider ways of using water more wisely. The garden is a great place to start.

The dry tolerant plants growing here flourish in Central Otago's cold winters and hot dry summers, giving vibrant colour and seasonal beauty with much less water.

Explore this collection for some practical water saving ideas that you can implement in your own garden.

*A pamphlet about the plants in this garden is available from the **Cromwell Information Centre.***



## Choose dry tolerant plants

This garden contains a wide selection of drought tolerant plants able to thrive with infrequent or no watering though the summer. Two beds are designed to show dry tolerant plants from other parts of the world with similar climates to our own. The other two beds contain New Zealand native plants suitable for this area.

## How do you know whether a plant has water conserving features?

- In general, grey foliaged plants with hairy, succulent or wax coated leaves are adapted to growing in dry conditions.
- Plants with small or needle like leaves are also often drought tolerant.
- Plants with deep tap roots are better able to survive dry summer conditions.

## Design with grey

Grey and silver foliage plants can transform your garden.

- The water conserving nature of these plants makes them ideal for hot sunny dry sites.
- In garden design, grey and silver offer contrast and balance, accentuating the colours and textures of other plants.

## Create watering zones

- Group plants with similar water needs to save water.
- Clever planting helps to prevent over or under watering of individual plants.
- It can also help to simplify the design of an automatic watering system.

## Tips for wise watering

- Start by getting to know your garden's water needs.
- Even plants which are water misers will need some watering to establish in the first growing season.
- Create water retaining basins around plants.
- Give one good soak rather than several sprinklings.
- Tap timers or a well designed watering system can save you time and help you apply the right amount of water at the right time.
- Drip irrigation systems use the least water.

## Lawns lap up water

- Lawns can consume up to 90% of water in a garden.
- To reduce this consumption, water deeply and less often.
- Raise the height of your mower blades - longer grass has deeper roots and copes better with less water.
- When sowing a new lawn, choose more drought tolerant species such as fine fescues.
- Consider replacing part or all your lawn with less thirsty groundcover and mulch.

## Mulch and maintain your garden

- A layer of composted mulch, gravel or stone mulch can help minimise water loss from your soil. It needs to be about 7cm thick.
- Mulch also suppresses weeds and improves the long term water holding capacity of your soil.
- Good maintenance keeps a dry garden in great condition.
- Check for pests and diseases.
- Weeds use water, so keep the garden weed free.