

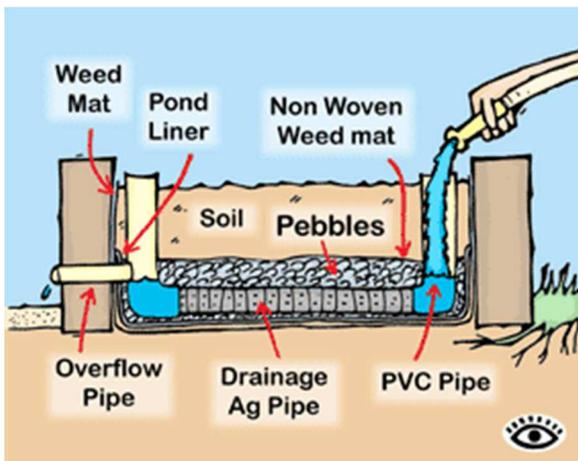


Info Sheet: Wicking Beds

A wicking bed has a reservoir of water at the bottom and the water is drawn up by capillary or wicking action through the soil. This reduces the frequency and amount of watering needed. Just the right amount of water is delivered to the plants as they absorb what they need, and very little evaporation occurs. Compost or fertiliser use is also reduced as the nutrients are not leached out by watering from the top. All watering is done by refilling the reservoir.

More information: www.abc.net.au/gardening/stories/s4010599.htm
www.urbanfoodgarden.org/main/wicking-beds/wicking-beds.htm

Wicking bed instructions – using an apple/potato bin



Wicking bed needs: Potato/apple bin (2.2 m square and ~70 cm high) or similar; 2.4 m builders plastic (or use pond liner for longer life); 30 cm length of ~30 mm pipe for overflow (or use any offcuts you have); 1.2 m square shade-cloth; approx. 2.5 m slotted ag pipe; 1.6 m sq carpet or 2 – 3 bags sand; scoria; compost/soil

Tools: Spirit level; staple gun; drill with special bit to make hole for overflow pipe

1. Make sure there are no nails or sharp bits on the inside of the bin.
2. Use a spirit level to ensure it is sitting flat (otherwise the wicking won't work evenly).
3. Make a hole for the overflow pipe approximately 20 cm from the bottom of the bin.
4. Cut 2.4 metre length of black plastic taking care to avoid making any holes.
5. Leave plastic folded in half and place in bin. Get the sides even and then make neat folds in the corners. Make sure the plastic is right down into the corners as otherwise the scoria will make holes in it once the weight is added. Staple plastic in place. We usually do this one side at a time and then the corners in-between. Make sure the staples are well above the planned depth of the scoria.
6. Line the bottom with carpet or about 3 cm of sand. If using sand this needs to be just enough to stop the scoria from making any holes. For carpet, cut a piece about 1.6 m square. Cut out small squares from each corner of approximately 20 cm so the edges will fold up the sides of the bin.

7. Place the ag pipe in the bin. This should make a part-circle at the bottom and come up along one corner so that watering can be done there.
8. Place a small piece of shade cloth over the end of the overflow pipe and fix it in place with a cable tie or string. Put the overflow pipe in place through the hole with approximately 10 cm sticking out of the side.
9. Add scoria to just cover the overflow pipe, taking care to keep the ag pipe in place and the overflow pipe level.
10. Cut a piece of shade cloth 1.2 by 1.2 m approximately. Place this on top of the scoria.
11. Add soil and/or compost to the required depth but remember there will be some settling over time so you can fill it close to the top.
12. Use a hose to fill the bottom reservoir through the ag pipe. Also water the soil well before planting to ensure the wicking effect can start. This should be the only time you need to water from above.

*If you want more information or would like to see a demonstration
please contact Kyneton Transition Hub
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or phone 5422 3023 (Julie)*



Picture shows the Kyneton Community Garden wicking beds in January 2014 after a series of 40 degree days with just twice weekly topping up of the reservoirs.