



Breathe better garden

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

A Breathe Better garden incorporates features which reduce potential allergy triggers. Some possible triggers found in the garden are pollens, fragrance from flowers, moulds, insects that sting, and chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides.

Pollens

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. Wind-borne pollens cause most problems for people who have asthma or hayfever.

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

For more information about managing pollen allergy see our Pollen Allergy information sheet.

Asthma, hayfever and dermatitis

When replacing plants or planning a garden it is important to note that asthma, hayfever and dermatitis can all be triggered by plants.

Some plants may not necessarily trigger asthma, but can cause dermatitis or hayfever. To reduce triggers try the following:

- Choose bird or insect pollinated plants rather than wind pollinated. This can be a problem if you have insect allergy
- Where possible, 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 prior to mowing can sometimes help. Close windows in the house before mowing

- Exclude hedges from your garden. They hold dust and pollen which is released when the hedges are trimmed. A possible alternative to hedge fences is low-allergy creepers grown over trellis
- 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 still on the ground
- Eliminate weeds as they are wind-pollinated plants. They can be reduced or eliminated with gravel/scoria mulches or carpets of ground cover
- Wear appropriate protective clothing when gardening. For example wear a hat to reduce the amount of pollen in your hair and wrap-around sunglasses to reduce pollen in your eyes. If you have a skin allergy keep arms and legs well covered, wear gloves and a face mask. Pollen will stick to your clothes so do not wear gardening clothes into the house
- Avoid the use of fountains or spray sprinkler systems as these can make spores/pollens airborne. The most dangerous season and time for pollen allergies is shortly 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
- Discuss the low allergy garden concept with your neighbours

For more information about specific 'low allergy' plants see our Breathe Better Plants information sheet.

Mould

To reduce exposure to mould in the garden try the following:

- Instead of using organic mulches that break down and produce mould and fungal spores, use inorganic mulches such as gravel or scoria
- Avoid compost heaps – they are a breeding ground for mould spores
- Thoroughly moisten potting mix prior to use to avoid mould spores becoming airborne and wash your hands thoroughly after use

Breathe better garden (continued)

Insect stings

If you have an allergy to insect stings, learn as much as you can about the behaviour of the culprit insects so you can work out strategies to avoid them. Some are:

- Avoid scented perfumes and other scented products
- Avoid scented plants and the clothes you wear around your own or other gardens
- When outdoors, cover up. Wear trousers, long sleeves and a hat
- Avoid walking bare foot in the outdoors.
- Store garbage in closed bags
- Keep food covered - especially meat and sweetened foods
- Be careful near wasp nests. Check your local Council - they may provide a service to remove the nests

Helpful tips

If you have asthma always use your preventer and reliever medication as directed and have your reliever medication with you whilst gardening.

For more information contact
Asthma Foundation SA:

Freecall **1800 645 130**
asthmasa.org.au

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