
The Noongar Six Seasons:

A Waterwise Guide for Muchea Water Customers

The Noongar seasonal calendar is a beautiful way to read the local landscape and understand the natural rhythms of Perth and the South West of Western Australia. Rather than dividing the year into four fixed seasons, it follows six seasons, each shaped by changes in weather, plants, animals, winds and water.

For Muchea Water customers, it's a helpful reminder that local conditions are always changing. When we notice the signs around us, we can better understand Country, appreciate indigenous knowledge, and make smarter choices about how we use water at home, in gardens and across local businesses.

Birak: December to January



First summer — season of the young

Birak is often represented by red, a colour that reflects heat, sun and fire.

In Birak, the rain eases and warm, dry weather starts to settle in. Mornings can bring hot easterly winds, while afternoon sea breezes may offer some relief closer to the coast.

Traditionally, this was a time for careful, controlled burning in mosaic patterns. This helped reduce fuel, support fresh growth, encourage seeds to germinate and make it easier to move across Country. You may also notice young birds leaving their nests, reptiles shedding their old skins, and young frogs completing their transformation into adulthood.

Waterwise tip: As the hot, dry weather begins, it's worth making sure every drop is going where it's needed. Water early in the morning on your allocated watering days so more moisture reaches the roots and less is lost to evaporation.

Top up coarse mulch to around 5–10 cm deep, but keep it clear of trunks and stems. Before summer really bites, check sprinklers for leaks, misting, overspray and blocked nozzles, and move potted plants into morning sun or afternoon shade where you can.

Quick tip: Check your sprinkler spray pattern on a cool morning. If water is landing on paving, fences or roads, adjust the head before your next watering day.

Bunuru: February to March



Second summer — season of adolescence

Bunuru is often shown in orange and is usually the hottest, driest part of the year.

With long hot days and very little rain, Bunuru was traditionally a time to spend more time near the coast, rivers and estuaries, where seafood and freshwater foods were easier to find.

Hot easterly winds are common, although a cooling sea breeze may arrive in the afternoon near coastal areas. Around the garden, this is the time to keep an eye out for heat stress and dry soils.

Look for white flowers on trees such as jarrah, marri and ghost gums. Female zamia cones also ripen from green to bright red, attracting emus, known in Noongar as weitj.

Waterwise tip: Bunuru is when water demand is often at its highest, so every watering really matters. Group plants with similar water needs together, use drip irrigation or low-throw sprinklers where suitable, and avoid watering paths, driveways, walls or paving.

It's also a good time to think about whether all lawn areas are still earning their keep, especially in hot, exposed spots. Replacing struggling lawn or high-water-use plants with waterwise species can lower long-term water use while keeping outdoor spaces attractive and useful.

Quick tip: Put a small container on the lawn while sprinklers run. If it fills quickly or unevenly, your system may need shorter run times or better adjustment.

Djeran: April to May



Autumn — season of adulthood

Djeran is often shown in green, reflecting cooler weather and the return of new growth.

Djeran brings relief from the hottest part of the year. Nights become cooler, mornings can be dewy, and winds often become lighter as they shift from the south-east to the south-west.

This is a season to look for red flowers, including red flowering gums and summer flame. Around Perth, sheoaks can show red “rust” and seed cones, while banksias provide nectar for birds and small mammals.

For gardens, Djeran is a good time to notice how watering needs begin to change as temperatures drop and natural rainfall may start to return.

Waterwise tip: As the nights cool, you can usually start easing back on irrigation. Reduce run times and turn sprinklers off after rain. If your controller has a seasonal adjustment setting, use it to scale watering down instead of leaving summer settings in place.

Djeran is also a great time to give sandy soils a boost with compost, clay-based soil improver or a suitable wetting agent. Healthier soil holds water for longer, supports stronger roots and helps gardens cope better when the next dry season arrives.

Quick tip: After rain, skip the next scheduled watering if the soil is still moist a few centimetres below the surface.

Makuru: June to July



Winter — season of fertility

Makuru is often shown in dark blue, symbolising rain, cold weather and full waterways.

Makuru is usually the coldest and wettest time of the year. Winds often come from the west and south, bringing rain and cooler conditions across the South West.

Traditionally, food sources shifted with the season, and many animals began pairing up in preparation for breeding. On lakes and rivers, you may see black swans, known as mali, preparing to nest.

Blueberry lilies and purple flags add blues and purples to the landscape. Toward the end of Makuru, the white flowers of the weeping peppermint begin to appear, hinting that Djilba is on the way.

This is also a good season to check drainage, gutters and outdoor areas so rainfall can move safely through your property and into the wider catchment.

Waterwise tip: In much of Perth and the South West, the winter sprinkler switch-off runs from 1 June to 31 August. Switch irrigation controllers to off, not just manual, so sprinklers do not restart after a power interruption or program reset.

Winter is also the perfect time to clean gutters, clear leaf litter from grates and look for areas where water pools or runs off too quickly. It's a practical season to plan waterwise planting, repair irrigation and prepare soil while it is easier to work.

Quick tip: During winter sprinkler switch-off, use the time to walk your garden and make a simple list of leaks, drainage issues and planting changes to tackle before spring.

Djilba: August to September



First spring — season of conception

Djilba is often shown in pink, symbolising growth, wildflowers and the renewal of plants.

Djilba is a season of change. Cold, clear days can sit alongside warmer, rainy and windy weather, with the occasional sunny day giving a sign that spring is on the way.

This is when the South West's famous wildflower season begins. Yellow flowering plants, including acacias, often appear first, followed by cream flowers and vivid blues.

As temperatures rise, the flower stalks of balgas, or grass trees, begin to emerge ahead of Kambarang. Newborn animals become easier to spot, and woodland birds such as koolbardi (magpie), djidi djidi (willy wagtail) and wattlebirds may be busy protecting their nests.

In the garden, Djilba is a good time to watch for new growth before changing watering routines for the warmer months ahead.

Waterwise tip: Before you restart regular irrigation after winter, test each station briefly and watch where the water lands. Fix blocked, leaking or misdirected sprinklers before increasing run times. Hold off returning to normal watering until the weather is warmer and drier. If you are planting, choose waterwise species suited to local soils and group them by similar water needs so each garden zone gets the right amount of water.

Quick tip: When restarting irrigation, turn on one station at a time and watch it for a full cycle so you can spot leaks, blocked heads and dry patches.

Kambarang: October to November



Second spring — season of birth

Kambarang is often shown in yellow, symbolising warmth, light and the return of hot weather. During Kambarang, dry spells become longer and the landscape bursts into colour. Acacias, banksias, kangaroo paws and many other plants flower, creating one of the most noticeable seasonal changes of the year.

One of the most striking sights is the moodjar, or Australian Christmas tree, with bright orange-yellow flowers that let us know warmer weather is on the way.

Reptiles become more active as temperatures rise, so October and November are common times to see snakes moving through bushland and gardens. Baby birds are also calling for food, and koolbardi (magpies) may continue to protect their nests.

Waterwise tip: Before summer demand increases, give your irrigation system a proper check. Repair leaks, replace broken fittings, adjust sprinkler heads and make sure each station is watering plants, not paving or fences.

In Perth and many surrounding areas, sprinklers should only be used once on allocated watering days, before 9 am or after 6 pm. A simple reminder can help you keep track of your roster, and adjusting run times as the weather warms is better than relying on the same setting all year.

Quick tip: Set a calendar reminder at the start of Kambarang to check watering days, controller settings and sprinkler direction before summer heat arrives.

Why this matters for water use

The Noongar six seasons invite us to slow down and notice what is happening around us, not just what the date says on the calendar.

For households, businesses and gardens, that means using water in a way that responds to the season: easing back when it is cooler and wetter, planning ahead for hot dry spells, and choosing plants and practices that suit the Perth region.

It is also worth checking your current watering days and any local restrictions, as sprinkler rules can vary by location and water source.

By learning from seasonal signs, we can all play a part in caring for water, landscapes and Country throughout the year.

This article draws on publicly available information about the Noongar six seasons and general waterwise gardening guidance. Muchea Water acknowledges the continuing connection of Noongar people to Country and recommends seeking advice from appropriate Noongar cultural knowledge holders for cultural interpretation.