

Planting over easements

Information Sheet



What is an easement?

Easements are sections of private property that have a water main or sewerage pipe running through them. Easements are found on many residential properties. If you have one it will be marked on your land title.

Occasionally City West Water or your local council may need to access the easement to install or maintain the pipes. To ensure that the easement is accessible, you need the written consent of City West Water to build any structure over an easement or within one metre of a City West Water asset.

It is advisable to keep the easement as clear as is practical of structures such as sheds, BBQs and woodpiles so that access and maintenance can be carried out.

Can I plant a garden over an easement?

It is also important to think carefully about the type of plants that you place over and near an easement. Many plants have the potential to cause problems for the pipes buried underneath.

Trees, in particular, have extensive root systems that can infiltrate pipes. Tree roots seek out moisture and nutrients, which are both contained in drainage and sewerage pipes. A small fracture in a pipe is all that a root needs to find its way in and spread. Roots growing in a pipe can slow the flow rate and can cause blockages or damage the pipe.

If a tree has caused damage to a pipe, it will need to be professionally removed and maintenance crews may need to dig up the entire garden located over an easement in order to install or repair it.

What can I plant over an easement?

There are a number of plants that can safely be planted on and near an easement that won't upset the drainage system. In general, groundcovers, climbers, grasses and small shrubs do not have deep root systems that can damage pipes.

It's best to have a chat with your nursery about the types of plants that are less likely to cause problems with the pipes in your easement.



As a general guide, here are some plants that you should avoid planting over or close to an easement:

- Mirror Plant (*Coprosma repens*)
- Lilly Pilly (*Eugenia smithii*)
- Weeping Lilly Pilly (*Eugenia ventenatii*)
- Fig Ficus (all species)
- Salt Paperbark (*Melaleuca halmaturorum*)
- Moonah (*Melaleuca lanceolata*)
- Flax Leaf Paperbark (*Melaleuca linariifolia*)
- Prickly Paperbark (*Melaleuca styphelioides*)
- Lombardy Poplar (*Populus nigra*) (and most other poplars)
- Cape Virgilia (*Virgilia orobides*)
- Weeping Willow (*Salix babylonica*) (and all other willows)

It is best to talk with your nursery about the type of plants that best suit your circumstances.

Most large trees such as eucalypts, pines, cypresses, fruit trees and shrubs such as bottlebrushes can also cause problems if planted too close to easements or houses.

An example of water and sewer pipe placement in a residential area. Easements on private property provide access for City West Water or the local council to install or maintain the pipes.



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