



EAST GIPPSLAND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT



wicked garden beds

LAND/THINK LOCAL

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For those who are uncertain of the term ‘wicked bed’ it refers to any garden bed, which has a waterproof membrane at its base, with a small amount of ponding potential around the edges.

Effectively a large version of a plant pot but with the drainage holes part way up the sides. It is simply a matter of bringing the plastic membrane up around the sides so that a pool of water can be retained. Water applied to the bottom of the bed will then wick up into the soil layers above.

This wicked bed system has the potential to be the most water efficient garden bed that I am aware. When a good layer of mulch is placed over the soil surface, the potential for water evaporation is minimal. With all artificial watering being done by adding water to the bottom of the bed, then we produce a situation where nearly 100% of water loss is via transpiration (evaporation from leaf surfaces) and nearly 0% by evaporation (no surface soil water loss).

Some of the other benefits of this system include:

1. the whole garden bed can be watered evenly by applying water (fresh or recycled) into the open end of a short 100 mm PVC vertical pipe, which may be located at any point in the bed.
2. Being wetter at the bottom and dryer at the top, with a heavy mulch layer, weed germination and growth is minimised.
3. It is the perfect way to recycle household water, just pour it down the 100 mm priming hole.
4. The ability to place this type of garden bed very close to other water hungry vegetation (even large trees), and then not lose a single drop of water to those competitors is a vital consideration for so many “new or extra’ garden beds.

