Front yard, entry and paths

A well-placed, easily read house number assists visitors and Emergency Services to locate your home. The letterbox should also be easily located and accessible. See the ‘Accessible Paths’ fact sheet for more information.

The house should address the street. This means that the house appears to face or look onto the street or footpath. The appropriate use of landscaping can clearly define the separation between public, semi-public and private spaces. For example, separation between the public footpath, the front yard and the path to the front door.

The front entrance and path should be well-defined and visible from the street or public space. This will welcome visitors and discourage potential intruders who will prefer to approach houses that are concealed from view. Movement sensor lights will maintain visibility at night and reduce the risk of trips and falls.

A covered entrance will help protect people from the elements.

Low-speed run over, usually in driveways is the third most frequent cause of injury or death for toddlers in Queensland. The driveway should be separated from play areas to reduce the chance of incidents involving children and cars on the driveway. Consider a barrier such as a fence or raised garden bed to achieve this.

Garden gates should be self-latching and self-closing to minimise the risk of children wandering out of the yard unnoticed. Select gate latches that are lockable, easily reached from both sides and operable with one hand from a sitting or standing position. Gates should open beyond 90 degrees and not restrict the width of the path. Refer to the Building Code of Australia for mandatory requirements that apply to pool fences and gates.

People of all abilities can use gently-sloped footpaths and driveways. Paths should have reduced-slip surfaces and good drainage to minimise the risk of slipping on wet or mouldy surfaces. To minimise tripping and slipping hazards, avoid placing trees with large surface root systems and plants that drop branches or large amounts of leaves, flowers, bark or sap adjacent to paths.

A step-free entrance (10mm maximum threshold) will provide easier access for people of all ages and abilities.

Landscaping

Ensure fences, screens and structures cannot be used as ladders which provide access for intruders into the yard or to upper levels of the roof. Fencing should be designed to achieve a balance between providing privacy, allowing surveillance of the surrounding area and shielding or encouraging breezes.

Consider raised garden beds (approximately 600mm) so that people of all abilities can easily attend to them. Ensure that poisonous or allergenic plants are not planted in the garden as they can be a risk to children and pets.
To access further information about hazardous plant species, refer to the Queensland Health web site or contact the Queensland Herbarium on (07) 3896 9325.

Plant **locally native plants** to reduce the amount of watering, fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides required to maintain the garden. These plants will also attract native birds and butterflies.

Provide a space to **compost** fruit and vegetable scraps and garden waste. This will reduce the amount of rubbish going to landfill and provide mulch for use in the garden.

Avoid placing **garden beds and landscaping** against the house to decrease the likelihood of termites entering your house.

Consider the **ongoing maintenance** of landscaping, lighting and other outdoor features to reduce future problems and associated costs.

### Trees

Trees can be located to **provide shade in summer**. In cool climates, deciduous trees or trees with tall trunks can provide shade in summer and allow the sun to enter living areas in winter, when the sun is lower in the sky.

**Shade from trees and pergolas** will reduce reflected heat and glare entering the home.

**Trees and bushes** should be positioned and maintained to allow natural surveillance around the house and not conceal potential intruders.

When selecting trees for planting, **consider the impact of the fully grown tree**, such as potential damage to paving, footing and drainage lines, and possible damage to the house from falling branches.

Leaves dropped from mature trees are a common cause of blockages to gutters and downpipes.

Site the house away from large trees and if necessary, consider removing potentially dangerous trees. **Replace native trees** that have been removed, by planting with the same species in a safe location elsewhere in the yard.

Damage to footing is often caused when tree roots take moisture from the soil causing the soil to shrink.

A **root barrier** should be considered if a substantial tree is located adjacent to the slab of the house.

### Water Management

**Grouping more water demanding plants together** can reduce the amount of water needed in the garden.

Reducing the **size of lawns** can reduce the amount of water usage. Lawn mowing is also a source of air and noise pollution.

Plan your house and garden to preserve natural **overland water flow paths** where possible. Retain on the site stormwater discharged from hard surfaces or diverted from natural overland flow paths, by directing it to porous soft landscaped areas away from the house.

Ensure there is **adequate drainage and drainage pits** adjacent to the house and under taps to avoid the build up of moisture in the soil, which can cause the soil to expand and crack the footings. Repair dripping taps immediately to minimise the build up of moisture and to conserve water.

**Rainwater tanks** can provide water for irrigating the garden instead of using town water.