

Xeriscaping

Water shortages have become increasingly common across the nation and in our local area as drought conditions prevail, populations grow and development increases. However, altering our everyday behavior can conserve these precious water resources. One area where this is particularly true is in the design and maintenance of our lawn and garden. With a little extra planning and consideration, xeriscaping can help conserve water supplies while providing an aesthetically pleasing landscape.

What is Xeriscaping?

Xeriscaping literally means dry landscaping. It is a relatively new method of landscape design and maintenance that uses less water than traditional techniques. The goal of this technique is to create visually attractive landscapes that use plants selected for their natural water efficiency. In many cases this involves the use of native species along with drought tolerant exotics. Along with a reduction in water use, xeriscaping results in less yard maintenance and often a decrease in chemical use.

Why Xeriscape?

- **Save Water**-Typically xeriscaping uses 25-75% less water than traditional landscape designs.
- **Save Time**-Xeriscapes require less watering, mowing, fertilizing, etc.
- **Save Money**-Xeriscaping will result in lower water bills and maintenance costs.

What Xeriscaping is NOT...

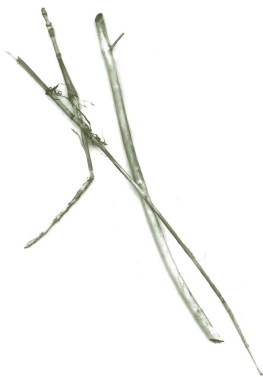
- It is not “zero-scaping” which uses only rocks, cacti and yucca plants
- It is not rigid or formal; every xeriscape can be different depending on individual needs and resources
- It does not require the use of only low-water-use plant species; parts of the property can still include water-demanding species.

The Seven Fundamentals of Xeriscaping

1-Planning and Design-Several questions have to be asked regarding the property and individual needs including: Where and how much sun does the property get? What is needed as a living area? Are there views that need to be saved or blocked? How much time do I have to work on the property?

2-Soil Improvement-Addition of organic matter can improve the moisture retention of most soils. However, some xeric plants do not need enriched soil and will prefer the drier substrate.

3-Limited Turf Areas-The size of your lawn can be reduced to fit individual needs. Turf can be replaced by more water-wise ground covers and shrubs. Replacing



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For an extensive list of water-efficient landscape plants and growth requirements visit the Colorado Springs Utilities website at:

www.csu.org/xeri

To see which plants are suitable for our climate (Zone 5) and to order a wide variety of grasses, shrubs, succulents and flowers try:

www.highcountrygardens.com

If you are interested in creating your own xeriscape, native and water-efficient plants can be purchased at the following local nurseries.

Grasses, wildflowers, trees and shrubs:

Webb Garden Center and Nursery
162 Glendale Rd, Bellevue
788-2066

Grasses and wildflowers:
Hailey Nursery
801 Main St., Hailey
788-3161

There are also an abundance of landscapers in the area that could help create a water efficient lawn and garden

water-guzzling bluegrasses with drought tolerant buffalo grass or blue gramma grass will greatly reduce the amount of water needed by the lawn.

4-Low-Water-Use Plants-Choosing native and water efficient species can save time and water. Furthermore, grouping plants with similar water needs in particular zones will reduce the amount of water that is wasted by species that do not need it.

5-Efficient Irrigation-A well designed irrigation system will result in significant reductions in water use. Low volume drip irrigation and similar systems should be used for shrubs and low-use ground cover species, ensuring that these plants only get as much water as needed. Sprinkler systems are more effective for turf but should be used during cooler parts of the day (9pm-7am).

6-Mulching-Mulch covers the soil, minimizes evaporation, cools the soil, reduces erosion and prevents weed growth. Mulches can also provide visual improvements. Organic mulches include bark chips, wood grindings and composted cotton burrs. Inorganic mulches such as gravel and composted granite can also be used.

7-Proper Maintenance-Although xeriscaping requires less maintenance than traditional methods it is important to fertilize, prune, mow and control pests in a way that ensures minimal water use and so that your landscape stays beautiful.

Xeriscaping Options

- **Ornamental grasses**-Drought resistant, require minimal care, do well in direct sun, come in variety of beautiful colors and may bloom in spring and fall.
- **Trees and Bushes**-Many types of deciduous and evergreen trees are available. Dwarf varieties will not overshadow other plants and will use less water. Sage species are only some of the many low-water shrubs
- **Succulent Species**-Cacti, aloe and others require very little water yet come in a wide variety of colors and shapes.
- **Rock Gardens**-Burying boulders of different sizes, colors and textures in sand can be very attractive. Focus on contrasts between rocks and include clusters of succulent plants and walkways within the garden.
- **Wildflowers**-Hearty, visually pleasing and water efficient landscape plants can be used within gardens or even to replace an entire lawn. There are too many species to list but they are easily obtained and very attractive.

If you have any questions about this fact sheet, please contact the ERC or click on www.ercsv.org

