



## Xeriscapes

Xeriscape, from the Greek *xeros* meaning dry, is a form of landscape design that promotes creative approaches to water conservation by helping people improve their landscapes and reduce the need for water and maintenance.

Any homeowner who has experienced drought, high summer water bills or dissatisfaction with a stressed-looking landscape despite the care given to it, can appreciate the benefits of water-wise landscaping. Using plants whose natural requirements are appropriate to the local climate is key. The low levels of rainfall shaped the natural landscape of western America. Today's urban landscape is often artificial, attempting to recreate landscapes that originated in the eastern United States where rainfall averages 30 inches or more per year.

The most important aspect of any landscape project is to consider the appropriateness of the plan to the environment. If your neighborhood is reminiscent of "Leave It To Beaver" with green front lawns, picket fences and geraniums, Xeriscape is not for you. Every neighborhood has one yard where someone thought that two truck loads of pea gravel and a couple of whiskey barrels were much better than lawn. The fact is, that an appropriate, well-planned landscape will add thousands to the market value of your home. On the flip side, a design that is not harmonious with the neighborhood will detract from the value of your home by reducing "curb appeal." It will also make the neighborhood block party less comfortable! If your yard is in a dry, sunny very natural area, Xeriscape may be for you.

Planning your landscape design in advance of planting has always been recommended and with a xeric landscape, it is even more important. To create a drought-tolerant landscape, consider the following guidelines:

### **Plan your landscape with visual priorities**

What areas of your yard are often viewed at close range? Your front entrance? These high profile areas should receive high priority for visual impact and may merit a higher water usage. An area that receives lower use, such as a backyard corner, could use plants that require less irrigation or materials that require no irrigation.

### **Reduce lawn areas**

Your lawn is the component of your landscape that uses the most water. Large areas of your lawn that receive little or no use could be replaced with drought-tolerant plantings of creeping juniper, sedum or other types of ground cover and native perennials. When planted in beds that feature a landscape fabric and a mulch on top of the fabric, these planted areas will conserve water and require less maintenance than a lawn.

Another way to reduce your lawn area is to incorporate more hard surfaces into your landscape, such as patios, decks and walkways. Emphasize natural materials, such as rock flagstone, gravel “mulch,” or outcroppings of large boulders. You can make these hard surface areas appear less rigid by incorporating flowing lines into their design.

### **Use native plants**

Native plants are those that are found locally and have adapted to our dry, cold climate. Many of the plants we use and ornamentals have been introduced from other climatic areas. These plants do well as long as we can provide the conditions required for their optimum growth. These conditions usually include more water and winter protection. There are many native plants that have excellent ornamental value, yet are more tolerant of cold, heat and drought.

### **Trees**

- Amur Maple—*Acer ginnala*
- Catalpa—*Catalpa speciosa*
- Hackberry—*Celtis occidentalis*
- Green Ash—*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*
- Honeylocust—*Gleditsia triacanthos inermis*
- Rocky Mountain Juniper—*Juniperus scopulorum*
- Black Hills Spruce—*Picea glauca*
- Colorado Spruce—*Picea pungens*
- Ponderosa Pine—*Pinus ponderosa*
- Bur Oak—*Quercus macrocarpa*
- Russian Olive—*Elaeagnus angustifolius*

### **Shrubs**

- Siberian pea-shrub—*Caragana* species
- Juniper —*Juniperus* species
- Potentilla—*Potentilla* species
- American Plum—*Prunus americana*
- Chokecherry—*Prunus virginiana*
- Sumac—*Rhus* species
- Alpine Currant—*Ribes alpinum*
- Buffalo-berry—*Shepherdia argentea*
- Lilac—*Syringa* species
- Nannyberry Viburnum—*Viburnum lentago*
- Mountain Mahogany—*Cercocarpus ledifolius*
- Western Sandcherry—*Prunus besseyi*

## Perennials & Grasses

- Yarrow—*Achillea* species
- Purple Coneflower—*Echinacea purpurea*
- Sea Holly—*Eryngium alpinum*
- Blue Fescue—*Festuca ovina*
- Indian Blanket Flower—*Gaillardia* species
- Daylily—*Hemerocallis* species
- Bearded Iris—*Iris* species
- Gayfeather—*Liatris* species
- Missouri Primrose—*Oenothera* species
- Ribbon Grass—*Phalaris arundinaceae*
- Desert Candle—*Yucca filamentosa*

## Groundcovers

- Pink Pussy Toes—*Antennaria* species
- Snow-in-summer—*Cerastium tomentosum*
- Creeping phlox—*Phlox subulata*
- Creeping Juniper—*Juniperus* species
- Stonecrop—*Sedum* species
- Hens & Chicks—*Sempervivum tectorum*
- Lamb's Ears—*Stachys lanata*
- Buffalo-grass—*Buchloe dactyloides*
- Gro-lo Sumac—*Rhus aromatica*

If you are interested in exploring xeriscape options for your yard, try it in small pieces. If you're not starting from scratch, try it in a few sections of your yard and see how you like it before you call for the pea gravel! Have fun!

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