

Xeriscaping

Objective: to explain the concept and basic principles of xeriscaping.

Training Materials: plants appropriate for xeriscape.

Lesson: *Xeriscaping is the concept of saving water in attractively landscaped areas. It is not necessarily a dry, rocky arid-looking landscape, but uses several different principles to create a striking landscape with reduced water requirements. Xeriscaping combines the Greek word xeros – meaning dry, with landscaping.*

By definition, Xeriscape means some water applied in well-controlled amounts and locations in the landscape.

1. Through water-wise planning and design, groups of plants with similar cultural requirements (water, exposure) are placed together. Steep slopes that require greater amounts of water are terraced to reduced irrigation requirements.

2. As in any healthy garden, soil plays a vital role. Clay soils drain very poorly, while sandy soils drain too quickly, so improving the soil with the addition of organic matter is necessary.

3. Native, or indigenous, plants are naturally adapted to local soils and rainfall, but xeriscape gardens can include other types of plants as well. Perennials and herbs that come from the Mediterranean are suited to

water wise gardens, as are many annuals that originated in Australia and Africa. Remember that plants with like moisture requirements should be grouped together.

4. Turf areas, that require large amounts of water, should be minimized. Think of xeriscaping as 'less-lawn landscaping.' A more drought-tolerant grass blend should be chosen for the lawn in the spirit of xeriscaping.

5. Water the landscape efficiently. Make sure water only falls on landscaped areas. Water in early morning or evening to reduce loss from evaporation.

Adjust the watering times of automatic irrigation systems at least once a month to meet the seasonal water needs.

Install different irrigation zones for trees, shrubs and planting beds. Using water efficient drip irrigation applies a low volume of water that will soak deeply into the soil.

6. Mulching exposed soil areas will help keep soil cooler, retain more water and reduce runoff.

7. While xeriscape landscapes are not no-maintenance, they often have reduced maintenance requirements. Avoid high levels

of fertilizer and frequent lawn mowing, to encourage longer, drought-tolerant turf. Monitor for disease and insect infestations, to manage outbreaks early.

A xeriscape does not have to be a boring mono-culture of spiny plants in rocks and gravel. With careful planning a xeriscape can be a lush colourful garden with a diverse mix of plants - and require a lot less water.

Examples of xeriscape plants;
Trees: ash, honeylocust, Kentucky coffee tree, catalpa, burr oak

Shrubs: pea shrub, cotoneaster, sea-buckthorn, juniper, potentilla, sumac, yucca

Perennials: Yarrow, thrift, coreopsis, Echinacea, Gaillardia, lavender, penstemon, Rudbeckia, sedum

Annuals: marigolds, zinnia, cockscomb, verbena, portulaca, amaranthus

• *Xeriscaping is the concept of saving water in attractively landscaped areas.*

