

Steps for Xeriscaping

Xeriscaping, water-conserving landscape, drought-tolerant landscaping all defines the reducing or elimination of plant watering. Water conservation has become a responsibility of every human. How can we as gardener help with this goal of conservation? The following may give some ideas that YOU can use.

1. Have a plan. Graph your area with existing features, elevations, drainage, and plants you want to save. Then consider adding special arranges, sitting, play, shade trees, lawn, etc. This takes time, do not rush, check with neighbors to see what has worked for them or work with a professional.
2. Condition the soil. Is your soil the right condition for the plants you have chosen? Or should you choose plants for your soil conditions? Most soil can use some type of conditioning. Compost is always a good additive.
3. Limit the turf, especially if you need to add water to maintain the grass you want. Use local low moisture grass seed, or let it go dormant in summer heat.
4. Plant the right plant in the right place. Group plants with similar soil, water requirements and sun exposures. Native plants work well but others are ok if similar. Remember their mature size.
5. Mulch 2" to 4" to retain moisture, prevent weeds and keep the soil cooler, preferably organic as rock holds the heat.
6. Irrigate? This is what we are trying to avoid or to use very little water. If you need to water, try not to let the water be exposed to evaporation. Water the soil not the air, large drops are better than fine sprinkler. Have a limited amount of grass. Once new plants are established, they need far less water.
7. Maintain the areas. There is usually less maintenance in a xeriscape area if set up correctly. To help retain turf moisture mow 4" or higher and let the clippings fall, this helps shade the plants and helps to hold moisture. Avoid much fertilizer.