

Landscaping and Xeriscape

Facts

Landscaping accounts for 20-50% of all residential water use and provides the best opportunity for water conservation at home.

Tips

Landscaping

- Maintain a lawn height of 2 1/2 to 3 inches to help protect the roots from heat stress and reduce the loss of moisture to evaporation.
- Avoid planting turf in areas that are difficult to irrigate properly such as steep inclines and isolated strips along sidewalks and driveways.
- Aerate clay soils at least once a year to help the soil retain moisture.
- Promote deep root growth through a combination of proper watering, aerating, appropriate fertilization, thatch (grass clippings) control, and attention to lawn height. A lawn with deep roots requires less water and is more resistant to drought and disease.
- Mulch around plants, bushes and trees to help the soil retain moisture, discourage the growth of weeds, and provide essential nutrients.
- Plant in the spring or fall, when watering requirements are lower.
- When choosing plants, keep in mind that smaller ones require less water to become established.
- Collect rain water in a barrel and use it to water your garden (please note, this is not a legal practice in all areas).
- Use porous materials for walkways and patios to keep water in your yard and prevent wasteful runoff.

Xeriscape

The Basics

Xeriscape™ is a method of landscaping that conserves water. It incorporates seven principles including planning and design, soil preparation, use of plants suited to the soil and climate, creating practical turf areas, use of mulches, efficient irrigation, and proper maintenance. You can incorporate the principles of Xeriscape™ and still have a lawn and a beautiful yard. The key is keeping the amount of water thirsty plants and grasses in your landscape to a minimum.

Planning and Design

Plan your landscape such that plants with similar water requirements are clustered together. Designate zones for areas requiring frequent watering, occasional watering, and no watering at all such as decks and patios. Be sure to match plants to yard conditions such as sunny, shady, dry or damp. When creating a landscape plan, take into consideration how the yard will be used and how it can provide the greatest benefit with the least amount of maintenance.

Soil Preparation

Proper soil preparation requires a combination of turning, aerating and enriching the soil with compost or fertilizer. A little extra work in the beginning will pay off with healthier plants that require less water to stay healthy.

Plant Selection

There are many resources available that will help you choose plants appropriate for your region that match your needs and tastes. Visit your local library or nursery for more information.

Creating Practical Turf Areas

The type and location of turf areas should be incorporated into your overall landscape plan. Match turf areas to their intended use, as well as topographical and soil conditions. For example, avoid using turf as a "fill in" material and placing turf in areas that are difficult to irrigate properly such as steep inclines and isolated strips along sidewalks and driveways.

Use of Mulches

Mulches applied around planting beds aid in moisture retention, discourage weed growth, and provide essential nutrients as they decay. Mulches can also be used in areas not appropriate for planting. Materials can include bark, wood chips, pine straw, nut shells, gravel, crushed stone, or landscape clippings.

Efficient Irrigation

Efficient irrigation means applying water in the proper amount and only when necessary. Understand the different water requirements of the "zones" in your landscape and check automatic sprinkler or drip irrigation systems periodically to ensure plants are receiving the water they need without being overwatered. Proper irrigation will not only conserve water but promote deeper root growth resulting in a healthier more drought tolerant landscape.

Proper Maintenance

Regular maintenance will not only preserve the beauty of your landscape but will keep it healthy. Maintenance needs of a carefully planned Xeriscape™ should decrease over time as plantings mature. By following the seven principles your landscape will require less watering, mowing, fertilizer and other chemicals to keep it looking great.