

Xeriscape Garden

Xeriscaping includes garden designs using rocks, cacti and drought tolerant plant species. Xeriscape plants require minimum care once established. The drought tolerant plants able to grow in Saskatchewan planted here at the Conservation Learning Centre include: Cosmos, Snowland Daisy, Dianthus Red, Dianthus St. Parfait, Gazania, Portulaca Fuchsia, Dusty Miller Silver Dust, Dusty Miller Silver Lace, and Dwarf Pansy. Besides the species planted here, ornamental grasses, willows, dwarf conifers, succulents (aloe, sedum), and wildflowers (poppies, marigolds, cornflower, evening primrose, pansies, lily of the valley, delphinium) also thrive in arid conditions. When selecting your plants for the garden, choose drought resistant perennials with silvery foliage (many herbs). Research your plant before you plant it to ensure it is indeed drought tolerant.

Landscaping with slow growing drought tolerant plants conserve water and reduce yard trimmings. It requires less fertilizer and less pest control methods. Reducing the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers provides better air and water quality. This also helps preserve the beneficial organisms in the soil. Xeriscaping costs less money to maintain than regular gardens. Many environmental benefits arise from xeriscape gardens. These include: reduced erosion, less input of chemicals, fuel and water. Gardens also serve as a living pollution filter. Xeriscape gardeners will enjoy the low maintenance, lower labour costs, and less pests. Xeriscape landscaping uses rock gardens and plants that thrive in desert conditions. This can be great news for those of us who are tired of watering and cutting our lawns. Also increasing populations increase the demand on water, so saving water by not watering on lawn gives a feasible option. Drought tolerant grasses, trees, succulents and of course rocks can be used to get around this problem.

To create further interest in your garden, clay pots, painted vases, bird houses, wind chimes, stepping stones, decorative lighting, fountains (using recycled water) and other architectural features may be utilized. Simply placing wood chips, decorative landscape rock, or mulch around plants helps prevent moisture loss from the soil surface and competition from weeds. The soil you plant your xeriscape garden in must be fairly well drained. Compost can be used to help control the drainage of water through the soil. Compost also slowly releases nutrients for the plants to use. Place a layer of your compost about 3 or 4 times the size of the root ball and place your plant on top of this. Mulches should be used to protect the soil from erosion, reduce evaporation, reduce soil temperature, and reduce weed growth. Mulches support essential bacteria and allow seedlings to establish under protection. Xeriscape plants require a soaking of water once every 2 to 3 weeks. Here in Saskatchewan that usually means you will not have to water your garden all summer! If watering is necessary, only water where the soil requires moisture.

Xeriscaping provides an environmentally friendly low maintenance garden for gardeners. This type of landscaping provides many benefits for the earth and gardener. People should consider xeriscaping for its environmental benefits and time saving way of gardening.

By Brittany Smith (Summer Student, 2007)