



Xeriscaping ... a natural, water-efficient garden for a carefree summer

Xeriscaping (zer-i-skap): a complicated word, but when you break it down to its roots, it all makes sense.

Directly translated from its Greek origins, the word means 'dry scene', but in practice means designing landscapes that match local conditions with xeric (or waterwise) plants, trees and shrubs that will thrive.

By following these seven basic principles when xeriscaping your lawn and garden, you can create a lush, colourful and unique garden that requires less maintenance and water – leaving you to sit back and enjoy your summer!

1. Prepare with a plan

A good plan focuses on aesthetics and function. Start off by drawing your property (include property lines, decks and fixtures, etc.,) with current plants, shrubs and trees shown.

Think about design elements such as variety of plants, colour plant height and texture and what you'd like to see. Begin researching trees, shrubs and flowers that are compatible with your conditions and design elements.

2. Size According to Need

Size really does matter. Like all landscaping projects, xeriscaping means assessing your budget, property size and lifestyle needs. When determining the size of your project, look at planting waterwise ground cover, shrubs or perennials that match your design elements but help reduce watering needs while keeping watering costs down and your recreation time up.

3. Improve your lot ... literally

To keep the soil rich and fertile, use mulch or other organic materials. Before you plant, add a 5 to 7.5 cm (2 to 3 inches) layer of mulch on the soil around flowers and shrubs. Mulch provides nutrients, reduces weeds and reduces moisture evaporation so that you don't need to water your plants more than 2.5 cm (1 inch) a week—including rainfall.

4. Know your sun, soil and shade

Once you know the size of your project and the design elements you want, get to know the ins and outs of your land a little better.

Ask yourself! Is my soil dry or sandy? What are the drainage patterns? Does the area slope or is it flat? What is the exposure to heat and wind, sun and shade?

The answers will guide you in picking out the plants that will work best in your xeriscaped garden. Visit your local garden centre to learn more about the variety of low water-use plants that are available. Make sure you bring along your plan and a photo of the area you plan to xeriscape!

5. Choose your waterwise plants wisely

Carefully select waterwise plants that reflect the reality of the property you plan to xeriscape. For instance, in shady areas, use shade-tolerant species or consider a woodland shade garden. In sunny spots, plant drought-tolerant trees, shrubs or flowers ... or put in a wildflower meadow. For a water-saving lawn, consider species that aren't water hungry. Keep in mind most lawns only need 2.5 cm (1 inch) of water a week ... including rainfall.

6. Group similar waterwise plants together

In the mulch beds you created earlier, plant shrubs, trees and flowers that have similar watering needs. This makes watering more efficient and cost effective. Same rule applies to trees: together is better. Plant trees and shrubs in areas separate from irrigated lawns. And if you have narrow spots on your property – such as a footpath – consider placing natural stones, wood chips or even volcanic chip rock instead of a plant species. None of these options require watering, are pretty to look at, and require little or no maintenance.

7. Water wisely

Water xeric plants regularly – when you first plant them. Once the plants take root, gradually decrease watering frequency. Also remember to water early in the day. Just as important, avoid frequent, shallow watering because this can lead to shallow roots and disease. The general rule for watering is 2.5 cm (1 inch) a week, including rainfall. And don't worry if there's a little brown on your lawn... one rainfall and it'll all bounce back.

Waterwise plants for xeriscaped gardens*

*For a complete list of plants suitable for southern Ontario, visit your local garden centre.

Shrubs

- Beauty Bush
- Butterfly Bush
- Cotoneaster
- Five-leafed Aralia
- Flowering Quince

- Mugo Pine (dwarf)
- Rose-of-Sharon
- Sand Cherry
- Turkish Hazel

Trees

- Honey Locust
- Junipers
- Russian Olive
- White Oak

Ground Covers

- Creeping Lily
- Violets
- Snow-in-Summer
- Lamjum
- Rock Crest
- Wall Crest
- Creeping Phlox
- Candytuft



Creeping Phlox

Perennials

- Aster
- Day Lily
- Hosta
- Lavendar

- Purple Coneflower
- Yarrow
- Grout Weed
- Hollyhocks



Aster



Day Lily