

## The Principles of Xeriscape

The word 'xeriscape' ('zir-ə-skāp, 'zer-ə-skāp) originates from the Greek word *xeros*, meaning 'dry'. The word was first used (and was trademarked by) the Denver Water Board in Colorado.

There are many definitions of the term, but they all have one thing in common: conserving water in the landscape.

Similarly, there are many reasons to xeriscape:

- achieve 50% or more reduction in water use
- lower water use results in lower maintenance
- increase the value of your property with an attractive water conserving landscape
- create a landscape that will survive restricted water use during peak periods or drought conditions
- eliminate the need for toxic herbicides and fertilizers
- have a tangible, enjoyable way to reduce your impact on our environment
- provide food and habitat for many Okanagan species by using low-water native selections

Contrary to the common perception of xeriscape as large expanses of rock mulch with a few cactus and yucca providing the only signs of vegetation, a properly designed and installed xeriscape can be a colourful, lush, low-water landscape that provides year-round interest and beauty.

Xeriscape follows seven established principles. Generally, each principle builds on the one before it. To achieve the full benefits of xeriscape, implement all seven principles.

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|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 Planning and Design          | 5 Irrigation  |
| 2 Soil Analysis and Amendments | 6 Mulch       |
| 3 Practical Turf Areas         | 7 Maintenance |
| 4 Plant Selection              |               |

Water management and conservation is identified as an important matter in the Okanagan (and, indeed, globally). There are many excellent informative resources available locally, as well as a growing availability of appropriate plant material, both native and adapted species.

- Okanagan Xeriscape Association (OXA) at [www.okanaganxeriscape.org](http://www.okanaganxeriscape.org). Be sure to check out the Plant Database.
- xeriscape classes offered by OXA and Okanagan College ([www.okanagan.bc.ca](http://www.okanagan.bc.ca))
- xeriscape garden tours guided (G) and self-guided (SG): un-H2O Garden (SG); Meadowlark Festival (G); Summerland Ornamental Gardens (SG); Grasslands Nursery - Summerland (SG); tours hosted by Valley garden clubs (G).