

OKANAGAN XERISCAPE ASSOCIATION

President's Report

2022 AGM

October 15, 2022

It's been another really hectic year for OXA with new gardens, expansions, a broader reach up and down the valley, expanded plant database, an additional plant sale, new collaborations, more presentations on xeriscape and a new venue for our column, Gardening with Nature.

Our dedicated executive-director, Sigrie Kendrick, has become a popular presenter of the xeriscape message for cities and their employees around the Okanagan, strata groups, community organizations, nature and garden clubs, and individuals who are looking for mentorship.

Her xeriscape column now appears not only in Black Press newspapers, but also online, on Castanet, every two weeks, where it has proven to be a really popular feature, read by thousands.

Expansion of this popular UnH2O Garden continued this year, and we continue to maintain a planter at Kelowna City Hall and at the entrance to the city's wastewater treatment plant office.

A big project this year was our collaboration with the City of West Kelowna to create another xeriscape demonstration garden, a smaller one, called the West Kelowna Xeriscape Spirit Square Garden where we are demonstrating new varieties and largely different plants than here at the Kelowna garden.

That involved planning, designing, planting and maintaining another garden a good distance away, but we hope to encourage neighbours to form a new cadre of volunteers interested in helping out there.

At the request of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, OXA took on the task this year of spearheading its Make Water Work program, doing outreach at nurseries throughout the valley and spreading the xeriscape message more broadly.

OXA's traditional spring plant sale returned to an in-person event, and it was our most successful yet. It was followed by our first fall plant sale, at which we encouraged gardeners to plant perennials in the fall instead of the spring, when they have a better chance at thriving come spring and then the heat of summer.

The xeriscape portion of the Master Gardener's Basic Training was taught in-person this year by Sig and she also has held successful online xeriscape classes both spring and fall this year.

Cities such as Oliver asked for our assistance to establish their own demonstration gardens, while Vernon Jubilee Hospital asked that we help them make their landscape more sustainable.

Our website has regularly been updated, including the extensive plant database, and new features added, including a regularly-updated blog, a plant of the month feature and a members' section.

Most of all, this year has seen an explosion of growth in our presence on social media, thanks largely to our director Sharon Spring, informing people about events and currently-colourful xeriscape plants while teaching them how to conserve water used on the land.

OXA also ordered cheery yellow tee-shirts with the OXA logo on them for sale to members and non-members and they've been really well-received and they help identify us when volunteering in the garden or at sales. A good OXA promotion.

Personally, I've been on the OXA board since it was founded in 2009, serving as secretary for the first six years, and as president for the past seven. We've all agreed that's too long, so I'm stepping back this year, but I will continue to serve on the executive as past-president until the next president is elected.

As well, I am planning to continue in my role as director in charge of communications for OXA, which I took on at the beginning.

There has been a lot of growth and change for the organization in the past seven years, including much expansion of all facets of our work.

Our website is now a dynamic, every-changing source of reliable and diverse information about xeriscape, including an amazing array of colourful photos and an extensive plant database.

From a word that few people had ever even heard before, xeriscape is now the word of the day.

Thanks to all of you for your support in volunteering with OXA to help spread that word and help people create beauty on their landscapes while conserving water.

—judie steeves