



November 2024

NEWSLETTER

Wildfire sparks a new gardening direction



It took a catastrophic wildfire to nudge me into embarking on a new garden adventure that had been in the back of my mind for decades: following in the footsteps of my mom and my favourite auntie and creating a rockery.

Returning home last year from evacuation to find the McDougall Creek Wildfire had destroyed 18 of our mature pines and firs and all our landscaping was ashes, sparked the idea to begin anew with something completely different.

The yard was destined to be full of sun all day without the little forest I'd loved, so it would be the perfect environment for the tiny alpine and Mediterranean perennials that fit so perfectly in the crevices between rocks. They also adore full sun and thrive on just a little supplemental water—important in drought years when irrigation is cut back drastically.

There's no shortage of rocks in our little corner of the world —so we got busy and began to gather up the ones we liked the look of.

We had all the 'danger trees' cut down and carted away the charred remains of our landscaping; got the stumps ground down; soil trucked in; and began to dig out a 'dry' pond from which the rockery would rise up in an arc where trees used to tower.

Our thought was that it would be enjoyed from the new patio furniture on the new wooden deck built to replace the fire-damaged one, and from the new windows replacing the cracked ones.

We finally were ready to begin buying plants by April and by June and July there were spots of colour. By August it was looking very colourful and lush as the new plants grew and bloomed, filling in the spots between the rocks and in some instances obscuring them.

The whole experience has been very gratifying and we've enjoyed the new garden right into fall.

It will evolve and we have plans for changes before next year: some things grew too big for the site they were planted in and new ones are being added. We planted mini narcissus and tiny scillas and other spring bulbs this fall so we're excited to see some spring colour. We also put in a few autumn-blooming crocus.

If you're interested in seeing photos of the progression of the project, you'll find them on the Okanagan Xeriscape Association website at:

<https://okanaganxeriscape.org/wildfire-recovery-rockery/>

Don't be afraid to embark on a new direction in your xeriscape garden adventures: ours has proven to be very satisfying.

Welcome to new OXA board members



At September's annual general meeting, a number of members stepped up to fill in positions that had come open on the OXA board as vice-president Sharon Spring moved on to become our new president.

Her role as director in charge of social media has been taken on by Kyla Fortushniok, while Jim King was elected and fills the treasurer's spot on the board.

Shauna Burnell is the new secretary and Jax Gullion is a new board member at large.

New welcome signs for the UnH2O Garden were unveiled just prior to the AGM and co-founder of OXA, Gwen Steele, gave a talk on the organization's beginnings, growth and development. Her talk can be read in the blog *On the Dry Side* on our website <https://okanaganxeriscape.org/the-history-of-oxa/> or at: www.okanaganxeriscape.org There's lots of information about xeriscape in those blog posts, incidentally.

Dig with Sig winner looks out on a new landscape



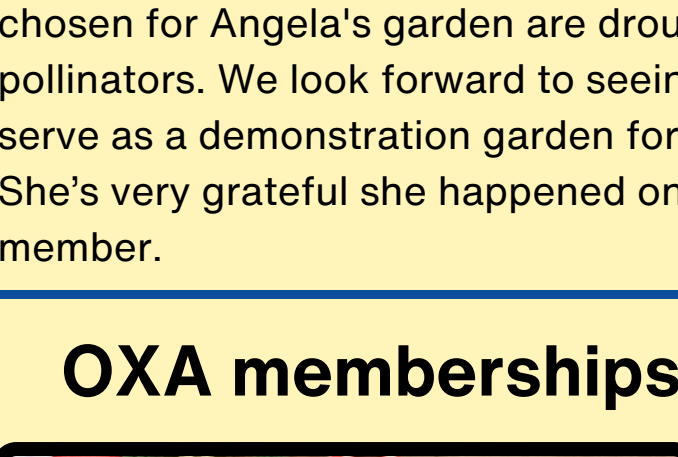
This year's winner of the Dig with Sig-at-home contest was Angela Surridge, who recently bought a house in Kelowna with a garden. After a little research she amended her plans to put in a water-thirsty weeping willow and joined the Okanagan Xeriscape Association. She wanted help replacing a patchy lawn with drought-tolerant plants that would make an attractive landscape.

And, that's exactly what happened in October, as Sig and a group of OXA volunteers descended on her home, bearing garden implements and plants and proceeded to transform her yard.

Sig says, "Angela had purchased a Syringa reticulata 'Ivory Silk' (Ivory Silk Lilac tree) from the Kelowna NeighbourWoods program. Volunteers planted this tree along with three Euonymus alata (Burning bush) and four Physocarpus opulifolius (Ninebark) shrubs. Also included in the planting were perennials: Achillea filipendulina 'Gold plate' (Yarrow), Nepeta 'Walker's Low' (Catmint), Hemerocallis 'Stella d' Oro (Daylily), Iris, Geranium sanguineum (Bloody Cranes Bill), and Sedum 'Autumn Joy' (Stonecrop). Ornamental grasses included in the planting were Helictotrichon sempervirens (Blue Oat Grass) and Panicum virgatum 'Shenandoah' (Switch grass). All of the plants chosen for Angela's garden are drought-tolerant and support a wide variety of pollinators. We look forward to seeing this garden mature and hope that it will serve as a demonstration garden for the neighbourhood.

She's very grateful she happened on OXA's informative website and became a member.

OXA memberships due: a great gift idea



With the end of 2024 coming up, your membership in the Okanagan Xeriscape Association is due for renewal. Buying now provides you with membership for the 2025 year. The support from your memberships helps OXA continue to do business; maintain and update its website and extensive plant database; maintain its xeriscape demonstration gardens; and work with other

non-profits and governments to educate the community about the water conservation benefits of xeriscape. Becoming a member of OXA has many benefits, including:

- Free admission to members-only OXA events held throughout the year
- 10 per cent discount on all OXA classes, workshops and seminars
- Early access to our Annual OXA Xeriscape Plant Sales
- Access to the Member Area page on our website where members can Request a Home Visit and ask questions of our experts
- Members-only tours of xeriscape-related facilities
- Email notification of gardening news and upcoming OXA events
- Nursery discounts (see details on the website)
- Membership in Mediterranean Gardening International (mediterraneangardeninginternational.com)

Membership in OXA is just \$35 for individuals or \$55 for families with a \$20 fee for students and you can pay on the website.

Consider giving the gift of an OXA membership to a loved one this Christmas or buy one for yourself and one for your best friend as well.

Remember, this organization runs on volunteers and we have lots of fun at the same time, so check the boxes on your membership card for all of the volunteer opportunities you might like to participate in.

We've moved to digital cards, so now you just need to keep it on your phone to show at nurseries or events. Or, you can print it off if you prefer a paper card.

Go to the website to renew or take out a new membership in OXA: www.okanaganxeriscape.org and click on the JOIN OXA yellow button.

Best wishes for the holiday season to everyone from all of us at OXA.

Xeriscape Comments or Questions?

If you have experienced a great success or a bit of a failure in your xeriscape efforts, feel free to help fellow xeriscape enthusiasts by sharing your experience.

Please go to the member section of the OXA website. There you can fill in a request form to comment or ask questions about xeriscape issues you've come across. You will notice the other exclusive member opportunity in this section - you can request a visit to your home using our Garden Mentor program. <https://okanaganxeriscape.org/about-us/member-area/>

All of us can learn so much from each other, so sharing our successes and disappointments helps everyone.

Join us on social media on Facebook and Instagram for regular updates about all things of interest to gardeners interested in xeriscape.

The blog on our website is also regularly updated and includes a wide variety of information about gardening.

There are lots of perks to membership in OXA. Read about them by going to our website: www.okanaganxeriscape.org.

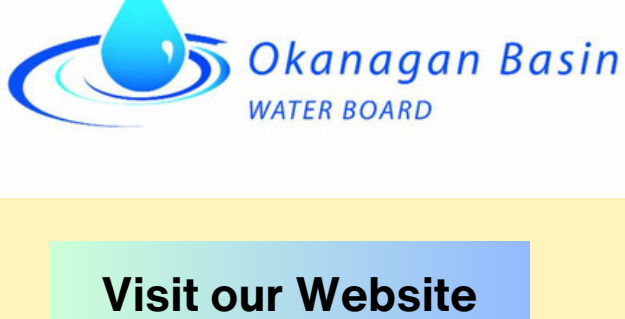
Visit our Website

OXA Membership

Feel free to share this OXA newsletter with friends and family, co-workers and neighbours and encourage everyone you know to support OXA by becoming a member. Everything we do depends on your support. Contact the editor at: judiesteeves49@gmail.com if you have questions.

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is a not-for-profit organization formed in 2009 to provide information on gardening with nature, or xeriscape, for those living in the Okanagan.

In collaboration with the Okanagan Basin Water Board
Make Water Work Program



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