

What is Xeriscape?

Xeros is from a Greek root word meaning dry. Xeriscape is a form of gardening that uses only the water received from natural rainfall, and thus drought-hardy, low maintenance plants are chosen for a xeriscape design.

There are many local plants that can be used, and there are extensive guides to natural plantings. Native plants are fundamental to xeriscape gardening, but most drought tolerant plants will do well.

Most people think cactus when they think of low water plants. There are however many beautiful flowering shrubs, berries, and flowers that match the colour and elegance of some of the more water-needy plants we may currently have in our gardens now.

Tired of watering, mowing, and fertilizing your lawn every few days? Xeriscape landscaping can save you all that trouble, with beautiful and bountiful results throughout the growing season.

In a xeriscape landscape, plants that are native to our drier area are a good choice. Native trees and shrubs also offer local wildlife familiar and varied habitat.



Consider a Rain Barrel

Rain barrels are efficient, economical and environmentally friendly, allowing water that might have run down your storm drain to replenish the earth and restore the aquifer instead!

Soft, warm, oxygen-filled rain water nourishes your garden plants, and is much better for them than cold, hard-treated water.



Did you Know?

A centimetre of rain falling on an 1100 square foot roof area will produce about 1,145 litres of water. With 4 gutter outflows on each roof, one rain barrel at each corner can collect approximately 258 L from one centimetre of rain. That's a lot of water!

XERISCAPE

Guide to Xeriscape Gardening in Williams Lake and Surrounding Areas



WATER WISE: A Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society Project in partnership with the City of Williams Lake



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SEVEN STEPS TO CREATING A XERISCAPE GARDEN

- 1. Planning & Design.** It's always a good idea to start with a plan. Sketch out the yard area to be created or renovated. Include in it the trees & shrubs that you want to keep, driveways, hardscapes such as decks, play areas, building dimensions, etc. Color code or mark on a second see-through page the sunny areas, shade areas, water requirements, and functions such as play, garden, pool, etc. Once these areas are firm in your sketch, draw a more defined plan to scale.
- 2. Improve the Soil.** Most soils in the west are sandy or heavy clay and need to have organic matter added to improve the soil to give the plants/ grass/ trees/ shrubs a fighting chance. Adding compost or aged manure (one or two inches to the existing soil and tilling it in to a depth of 6 inches) will give great results. This is the time to improve the soil — so don't skimp! Herbicides and pesticides will eventually make their way into



our waterways, so should be avoided. Instead, arrange your garden with a diversity of plants to avoid invasions of pests. Mulching, pulling weeds before they go to seed, and minimizing further soil disturbance will help keep weeds at bay.

3. Water Wise Lawns. Minimize your lawn area or very narrow strips, and substitute groundcovers in areas where turf is hard to grow or maintain such as on slopes or in the shade. Consult your local garden centre regarding using native, drought hardy grasses.

4. Water efficiently with appropriate methods. Plan the irrigation system at the same time as you plan your design. Nylon soaker hoses and drip line are an inexpensive and effective way to water gardens, shrubs and trees. Avoid overhead sprinklers as these lose too much water from evaporation and wind. But if you do use them, water only between 8:00 p.m. and 8:00a.m., using a timer, and never when it is raining or windy. Adjust your sprinkler system regularly to account for changes in climate.



Rocks can add flair to your garden without the need for much maintenance or water use.

5. Select plants appropriate for the climate and group according to water needs. Group plants according to their water requirements. Place low water using plants together and in areas that are hardest to get to with irrigation or hand watering. Place high water using plants in a low laying area where natural drainage will help with their maintenance. Reduce the likelihood of over watering by thoroughly thinking through and investigating plant needs before you start.

6. Mulch to reduce evaporation. Mulches will help you in many regards in the garden: reduce evaporation, cool the root zone, reduce weed growth, slow erosion and give a finished look. Apply directly to the soil surface or over a landscape breathable fabric. Organic materials like wood chips, leaves, grass clippings and compost eventually break down and improve the soil. Mulch a 7 – 10 cm or 2 – 4 inch depth, and keep mulch away from plant stems. Top them up regularly. Also use rocks to help conserve water, limit weed growth and prevent erosion.

7. Maintain your Xeriscape garden. No garden is maintenance free. Xeriscape gardens also need regular & seasonal care. Winter: prune deciduous trees & late blooming deciduous shrubs. Spring: Mow lawns to a height of 3", check sprinkler operations, prune evergreen shrubs, work compost into the soil and plant trees & shrubs. Summer: plant annuals, weed and trim dead flower heads. Fall: apply natural fertilizer, and compost both leaves & green plant matter.



**WATER IS LIFE.
PLEASE USE IT RESPONSIBLY.**