

Additional Principles of Xeriscape

In addition to the basic principles, there are specific xeriscape principles that will reduce water waste, and cause more efficient water use in the landscape.

1. Establishing zones for the various water requirements of the landscape means planting is divided into 3 water use areas. Zoning means choosing plants according to their water, sun, and soil needs while taking advantage of existing features of the landscape that compliment those needs. Xeriscaping utilizes the warm and cool microclimates created by shade trees, walls and other features.

- **Establish 3 watering zones**

- A. Area close proximity to house for watering once every 1-2 weeks.
 - B. Area out further in yard for watering once every 2-3 weeks.
 - C. Area furthest away and in obscure locations, watering once a month a month or more.
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2. Know your turf – Grasses require different amounts of watering. For example, Kentucky bluegrass uses 29 plus inches of water annually. There are various more drought tolerant Cool-Season and Warm-Season grasses.

- Cool-Season Grasses (green up in early spring and early fall): Creeping red fescue, hard fescue, tall fescue.
 - Warm-Season Grasses (green up in June and go dormant after first frost): blue and Side-oats gramma, little and big bluestem, etc.
 - Existing turf management
 - A. Aerate the lawn in spring or fall.
 - B. Interseed with grass seed after aeration:
 1. Sunny sites – Kentucky bluegrass, fescue or blue grama grasses.
 2. Shaded sites – Creeping red or other fescue grass varieties.
 - C. Light fertilization after aeration.
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3. **Soil Improvement**

- Existing heavy clay or compacted soils will require cultivation
- Good drainage from perennial planting beds is obtained by land grading or soil mounding
- Adding soil amendments to heavy clay soils will improve soil aeration and help them retain water better, yet without becoming soggy. Organic amendments

include aged manuring, peatmoss, compost, woodchips, leaves/needles. Etc. Adding these organic elements with sandy loam soil will ameliorate the existing soils.

4. Mulches

Mulches cover the soil and cool it thus minimizing evaporation, reducing weed growth and slowing erosion. Root growth of the plants is enhanced and plants are healthier.

- Organic mulches include bark/wood chips, wood grindings, compost, leaf/needles, straw, etc.
 - Artificial mulches are usually plastic and come in various forms and thicknesses. Only a porous interwoven type should be used which allow aeration and the transfer of moisture from under the mulch. Solid plastic mulches collect excessive moisture under the mulch and soils become water logged.
 - Rock can also be attractive mulch when used proportionally and with taste. Natural rock types occurring within the immediate area add to the attractiveness in the landscape. Excessive amounts of rock can build up heat in the soils around plants and scorch or cook plants. This defeats the purpose of xeriscaping, the well-being of plant materials and the attractiveness of the total landscape.
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5. Efficient Irrigation

When you set up planting zones in your landscape, the irrigation system should be appropriate for the landscape design and the frequency of watering required.

- Tree, shrubs, flowers and ground covers can be watered efficiently with low volume drip emitters, sprayers and/or bubblers.
 - Turf areas that require more water should be on a different irrigation system.
 - Lower pressure sprinkler heads, new on the market, are more efficient in the delivery of water where needed, with less fogging or misting that moves in a straight breeze.
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6. Proper Maintenance Turf

- Regular scheduled cutting at 3-4" instead of 1-2". This allows for less injury and quicker recovery.
- Less fertilizer can be better for the grass plant and less mowing.
- Use of a mulching mower will allow for better moisture retention and less water use.

Trees, Shrubs, and Perennial Plants

- Pruning of deadwood or portions of plants removes sites that often develop pest problems.
 - When you identify a spreading pest problem, have the problem identified and find out the best control measures.
 - Weed control should be minimized with the use of mulches, but they will periodically still occur. To control the spread of aggressive weeds, spot treatment may be required with selective herbicides.
 - Fertilizations are important when applied at the dripline of trees by using a root feeder 8-10" into the ground. Precalibrated fertilizer tablets are available for shade trees,
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7. More Xeriscaping Tips

- Terracing slopes will cut down on water runoff. Plant groundcover or spreading plants on slopes to reduce soil erosion and eliminate mowing.
- Frequent watering near your foundation can damage it. Be sure to plant shrubs away from the foundation and create a slope that takes water away from it.
- Tree shade lowers air and soil temperature. Evergreens are natural wind screens, while large deciduous trees provide summer shade.
- Mulches are multi-purpose performers in your landscape. They not only reduce water needs, they also hold down weeds and separate your dog's paws from the mud!