

Challenges of Desert Landscapes

- Low rainfall—8 to 10 inches/year, most of which falls during short summer monsoon and winter.
- Low humidity—usually 20 to 30%.
- High, gusting winds.
- Soil—clay to sandy loam, highly alkaline, highly saline with lots of rock.
- Temperature—as low as 10 to 15 degrees in winter and triple digit highs in summer.
- Mandatory water rationing every summer.



Texas Native Plants

Trees
Shrubs
Perennials
Short-lived Perennials
Annuals and Biennials
Grasses
Succulents/Semi-succulents

For recommendations, go to:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/elpasoplants/index.html>

Resource References

- Judith Phillips, Southwestern Landscaping with Native Plants, Museum of New Mexico Press, 1987
- Connie L. Ellefson, Thomas I. Stephens, Doug Welsch and Douglas F. Welsh, Xeriscape Gardening-Water Conservation of the American Landscape, Macmillan Publishing, 1992
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- Greg Starr, Cool Plants for Hot Gardens, Rio Nuevo Publishers, 2009
- Mary & Gary Irish, Agaves, Yuccas and Related Plants, A Gardener's Guide, Timber Press, Inc., 2000
- Meg Quinn, Wildflowers of the Desert Southwest, Rio Nuevo Publishers, 2000



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GARDENING IN THE DESERT SOUTHWEST PUBLICATION SERIES



XERISCAPE

LANDSCAPES FOR THE DESERT SOUTHWEST



LANDSCAPE PRINCIPLES FOR THE DESERT

What is Xeriscape?

Xeriscape means "dry landscaping" - perfect for an area like the desert. Xeriscape creates a visually attractive landscape that uses native plants selected for their water efficiency. Properly installed and maintained, a Xeriscape can use less than one-half the water of a traditional landscape and require less maintenance than a landscape that is primarily lawn.

Does that mean you have to give up your lawn? No! But if you minimize the amount of turfgrass, using it for appropriate areas such as near a pool, next to your home's foundation, or for pet or children's play areas, you can save a significant amount of irrigation water.

There are many colorful native plants that use little supplemental irrigation. Pairing these colorful beauties with our native cacti, succulents and desert accent plants creates stunning landscapes.



Benefits of Xeriscape!

LESS WATER. For most of North America, over 50% of residential water used is applied to landscapes and lawns. Xeriscape can reduce landscape water use by 50 - 75%, creating substantially reduced costs for the homeowner.

LESS MAINTENANCE. Aside from occasional pruning and weeding, maintenance is minimal. Watering requirements are low and can be met with simple irrigation systems.

LESS FERTILIZERS OR PESTICIDES. Using plants native to your area will reduce or eliminate the need for chemical supplements. Sufficient nutrients are provided by healthy organic soil.

IMPROVES PROPERTY VALUE. A good Xeriscape can raise property values which more than offset the cost of installation. Protect your landscaping investment by drought-proofing it.

CAN BE POLLUTION FREE. Fossil fuel consumption from gas mowers is minimized or eliminated with minimal turf areas. Small turf areas can be maintained with a reel mower.

PROVIDES WILDLIFE HABITATS. Use of native plants, shrubs and trees offer a familiar and varied habitat for local wildlife.

Xeriscapes save homeowners money, reduce pollution and conserve water!

Seven Principles of Xeriscape.

PLANNING AND DESIGN. The fundamental element of Xeriscape design is water conservation. Smart homeowners look for ways to reduce the amount of applied water and to maximize use of natural precipitation.

SOIL. The ideal soil drains quickly and stores water at the same time. This may require increasing the amount of organic material in your soil and keeping it well aerated. Compost is the ideal organic additive. It may be worthwhile to have your soil tested.

PLANT SELECTION. For best results, select plants that are native to your region. Use drought-resistant plants. Select plants for their ultimate size to reduce pruning. Don't mix plants with high- and low-watering needs in the same planting area. Trees help to reduce evaporation by blocking wind and shading the soil.

PRACTICAL LAWNS. Reduce the size of turf areas; retaining some turf for open space, functionality and visual appeal.

EFFICIENT IRRIGATION. Avoid overwatering. Soaker hoses and drip-irrigation systems offer the most efficient watering because they deliver water directly to the base of the plant. In general, it's best to water deeply and less often.

MULCH. Cover the soil's surface around plants with a mulch, such as coarse compost, wood chips, bark or gravel. Mulch helps retain soil moisture and temperature, prevent erosion and block out competing weeds.

MAINTENANCE. Xeriscapes can decrease maintenance by as much as 50 percent through reduced mowing; once-a-year mulching; elimination of weak, unadapted plants; and more efficient irrigation.