

XERISCAPE LANDSCAPING

Xeriscape is an American term derived from the Greek word xeros, meaning dry, and landscape, hence a dry landscape garden. The principles of xeriscape gardening can be used to save water in new or established gardens. The seven principles of xeriscape gardening are:

PLANNING AND DESIGN

Practical design in Xeriscape gardening should incorporate the layout of garden and entertainment areas and the need for lawn areas. The temptation to have lawn cover most of the garden should be avoided.

Install a suitable irrigation system for your needs including microdrippers and sprays. In an existing garden reduce lawn by turning it into mulched garden beds, or by increasing the amount of paved areas.

KNOW YOUR SOIL

For example, Canberra has poor soil quality in most areas, with high levels of clay and silt, but low levels of organic matter. This soil easily becomes compacted, is hard to work and has poor drainage. To improve soil add organic material, compost, manure and sawdust. Adding a layer of sandy loam or gypsum will help loosen up clay based soil.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLANTS

When planting, group plants together according to water use. High water use plants are best planted together in a low or wet part of the garden to make best use of drainage. Select plants for a purpose, such as shade, privacy, produce and aesthetics.

PRACTICAL LAWN AREAS

The less lawn, the lower your water bill. Plan your lawn areas carefully to match your recreational needs and for landscape presentation.

All grasses require regular watering and will suffer during dry periods. For green grass all year use a blend of Kentucky Blue Grass mixed with Tall Fescue, Fine Rye and O'Connor Strawberry Clover. Seed packets of this blend are available at nurseries and garden centres.

WATERING

The time and length of watering depends on soil types and what plants are in the garden. For plants and lawns you should water deeply and at times when it is cooler (early in the morning, in the evening or overnight).

A cyclical watering pattern is recommended. Watering for 10 minutes or until run off, leaving for 2 hours and watering again for 10 minutes. This frequency is determined by rainfall patterns. Avoid watering in strong winds and use a tap timer for consistent watering times.

Typical lawn watering frequency:

- **SPRING: every 7 - 10 days**
- **SUMMER: every 3rd day**
- **AUTUMN: every 7 - 10 days**

- ***WINTER: rarely/only if showing signs of water stress.***

USE MULCH

Mulch reduces evaporation and runoff, suppresses weed growth and keeps soil cool in summer. The use of mulch allows better water penetration and creates an attractive landscape. The most commonly used mulches are bark, woodchips, shavings, straw, leaves and pebbles. You should lay mulch 75mm deep, keep it away from plant stems and make sure you remove weeds before laying mulch. Black plastic is not recommended for stopping weed growth as it prevents soil aeration.

MAINTAIN YOUR GARDEN

Weeding, proper pruning and adjusting irrigation systems help reduce water demand. Following the Xeriscape principles will make maintenance easier and cheaper. There will be less mowing, fewer weeds and a reduced need for water, fertilisers and pesticides.

Xeriscope gardens go hand in hand with domestic wastewater reuse systems using sewage treatment for the reuse of wastewater on gardens.

There are three components to such a system:

- **a mobile solids separation system using modified wheelie bins to separate and compost solids.**
- **the Aquapro Greywater Treatment Unit purifying wastewater for reuse on gardens and in toilet flushing.**
- **the Ecopod Reed Bed System for final treatment of both grey and blackwater**