

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF XERISCAPE

1. Plan and design comprehensively: Have a plan. Find out where things are. Consider the view, the slope, the exposure and soils of the area. Take into account the existing vegetation and topography of the site and the intended use. Group plants with like water needs together. Decide where things will be. Decide when things will be done. Most landscapes are best done in phases.

2. Evaluate soil and improve if necessary: Soils can vary within a given site; an analysis based on random sampling can provide information for plant selection and soil amendments. When appropriate, soil amendments such as sphagnum peat moss or compost can improve root development, water penetration and retention. Improve the soil before planting and installing the irrigation system.

3. Create practical turf areas: The type and location of turf areas should be considered a major design element of the landscape. The selection and location of turf should be decided on the same basis as other plantings; i.e., the purpose and function in the landscape. The reduction or elimination of turf areas, and locating them separately so that they may be watered more efficiently, can result in significant reductions in water use.

4. Use appropriate plants and group according to their water needs: Most plants have a place in Xeriscaping. Plant selection should be based on the intended use in the landscape. Use of plants with low water needs will allow the maximum water conservation.

5. Water efficiently with properly designed irrigation systems: The irrigation system should be well planned and managed. Irrigate turf areas separately. Group plants with like water needs together. Not all plants need the same amount of water. Irrigation needs change with the season and the weather. Irrigate according to the condition of the plants, rather than on a fixed schedule. Plants may require supplemental irrigation until they become established (two or three years).

6. Use organic mulches to reduce evaporation: Mulches minimize evaporation, reduce weed growth, slow erosion and help prevent soil temperature fluctuations. The use of mulches, applied and maintained to proper depth, is one of the keys to a successful Xeriscaping. Organic mulches such as wood chips or bark are best. Do not use any solid plastic under the mulch or elsewhere in the landscape.

7. Practice appropriate maintenance: Proper pruning, weeding and fertilization, plus attention to the irrigation system, will preserve and enhance the quality of the Xeriscaping. A landscape adapted to the environment will require less maintenance, less fertilizer and reduce the use of pesticides and other chemicals. The principles of Xeriscaping will assure an attractive, healthy landscape with the use of the 'just right' amount of water