

Planning Your Own Xeriscape Garden



The following items are essential elements to consider when you are planning your Xeriscape Garden

GETTING STARTED

Decide upon a budget that is comfortable for you.

If it is not imperative to complete the garden immediately, many people use a phased-in design approach, adding portions of the garden or expensive features such as a pool when they can afford them.

Assessing your local site.

What is the terrain? Is it level or hilly? How is the drainage in your planned garden area? What is the soil like? Sandy, clay-like or loam? What is its pH? All of these factors will play a role in plant selection.

Draw a map to scale showing existing boundaries, buildings, hard surfaces, utilities and plants that you wish to retain in your garden.

Are there any special views you might frame with plantings or otherwise take advantage of? What are the views you care about most from inside your house? Can you locate your garden where you can enjoy it from indoors as well as outdoors? Are there other views you would prefer to screen?



What is your lifestyle?

Make sure the garden you design meets the needs of you and your family. What types of outdoor activities do you enjoy? Do you plan to entertain often and perhaps need a large deck? Designate certain areas of your property for particular activities; entertaining, sunning or recreation. Children and pets are an additional area of concern when siting your garden and selecting plants. Don't forget to include functional areas for firewood storage, trash cans and a compost pile. Check to see that placement of various features does not impede likely traffic patterns.

Optimum maintenance level.

Do you like to garden and are you willing to consider a moderate level of yard maintenance or would you prefer to do the least amount possible to maintain an attractive yard? Be realistic and create the kind of landscape you can enjoy in the future.

Planting design.

The style of your garden can be either formal and traditional, or have a more casual, natural feeling. Symmetrical, tightly pruned plantings demonstrate the formal style. In general, Xeriscaping lends itself to a more asymmetric, casual style of planting which is also lower in maintenance.

Select plants for your landscape using a variety of factors:

- hardiness regarding minimum winter temperatures
- suitability to soil type and wetness of soil
- size at maturity
- resistance to disease and insect problems
- bloom time and flower color
- appearance of foliage throughout season

Planting in zones.

As you select plants for your landscape, try to group them in zones according to the amount of water they need. In order for plants to be healthy, they should be situated with other plants that have roughly the same water needs. A cactus should not be planted next to a water-loving rose.

Lawn areas should be watered separately from the shrub borders. Using this technique you can have a landscape that is water efficient, but still incorporates some plants with higher water requirements.

Very low water zone.

In this zone, water is only used at the time of initial planting. Once plants in this zone are established, very little or no additional water is required. Since it is difficult to water plants far away from the house, you may want to locate these plants closer to your home.

Moderate water zone.

In this zone, water is only used at the time of initial planting. Once plants in this zone are established, very little or no additional water is required. Since it is difficult to water plants far away from the house, you may want to locate these plants closer to your home.

A special garden.

Your garden will be something you are proud of. Its beauty will be shared with your friends and neighbors. Involve others in your neighborhood in conserving water, trading plants and ideas. Xeriscape gardening provides us with a special opportunity to be responsible conservationists while performing an activity that brings beauty to our lives.

