

WHAT IS XERISCAPE?

Xeriscape is common-sense, water-wise gardening that can reduce landscape water use by as much as 50%. Designing a water-wise, low maintenance garden is simple. Just follow these seven basic principles of Xeriscape:

- 1. Start with a plan.** Consider soil type, drainage, water availability, and views. Next, develop a plan that can be installed in phases. Design your garden according to the amount of water each section needs and how it will be watered.
- 2. Analyze and improve the soil.** Analyze your soil with help from your local nursery. Add organic matter such as compost to improve drainage, moisture penetration and the soil's ability to hold water.
- 3. Use practical turf areas.** Grass usually needs more water than any other part of the landscape so incorporate it accordingly. Consider alternatives like ground covers, shrubs or a deck.
- 4. Select appropriate plants.** Use native or adapted drought-tolerant plants as much as possible. Native plants do not require much water or maintenance. There are many varieties of beautiful trees, shrubs, perennials and groundcovers that thrive in our Texas heat. These plants come in every color your gardening "palette" can imagine and they will beautify your garden with very little care or water once established.
- 5. Water efficiently to make every drop count.** Water your landscape only when your plants need it. Remember that most grasses only need one inch of water every 7-10 days. Most other plants need even less, especially if they are native and drought-tolerant. Water early in the morning or late at night to prevent evaporation. Use watering devices that throw large drops of water close to the ground
- 6. Use organic mulches.** Mulches conserve water and slow weed growth. Some common organic mulches include composted leaves, shredded cedar and shredded landscape clippings.
- 7. Maintain properly.** Xeriscape landscapes need less maintenance than traditional landscapes but still require adequate attention. Properly maintained yards will be better prepared to withstand drought, freezing and pest problems. Remove weeds so they don't compete with other plants for water and fertilize in moderation if necessary.