OKANAGAN XERISCAPE ASSOCIATION

January 2025

NEWSLETTER

Looking back on 2024—and forward to 2025



The past year, celebrating the 15th year since the Okanagan Xeriscape Association was first envisioned and created by Gwen Steele and Lisa Masini, has been a rewarding and growing year for us all.

The coming year, celebrating the 15th year since the UnH2O Xeriscape Demonstration Garden was created in Kelowna, will be a year of update and renewal in that garden. With several new board members, it will also be a year of renovation and renewal for the organization as each begins to influence the direction and scope of OXA, according to their experience and expertise.

Renewal is vital to the health of both gardens and volunteer organizations such as OXA so we're looking forward to an exciting year.

Last year, we welcomed a record number of new members and expanded our reach and influence on social media, with a total of 2,218 Facebook followers, 20 per cent over the previous year; and 1,056 Instagram followers, up 36 per cent from the previous year. Overall post views were also up, with 80,000 on Facebook and nearly 38,000 on Instagram. We welcome one of those new board members to head up our social media presence. Thanks to Kyla Fortushniok for volunteering for that role, allowing our previous 'social media face' to slide into her new role as president of OXA. Thanks and welcome to our new 'boss' Sharon Spring.

We now have 10 board members, ranging from two founding directors to a few brand new ones; and including people with a broad range of experience from writing to accounting; construction to landscaping; irrigation to web technology, marketing to biology and everything in-between.

It's a great group of volunteers who work together well as a team, respecting each other's knowledge and opinions.

In the broader community, the past year was also one of restoration and renewal after the wildfires of 2023 and I think we all have a new appreciation for ways in which we surround our homes and community with less flammable plantings in order to minimize damage due to climate change and its extremes.

There are a variety of new blogs on our website https://okanaganxeriscape.org/blog/ relating to wind, water, extreme temperatures and ways in which we can make our landscapes more climate-resilient.

And, that's the topic of a workshop we're putting on for professionals in the landscape and horticulture industry Feb. 28, so make sure you're part of that for your own update and renewal. It will be both a fun and a learning day so make sure you register. You can make sure you're on the mailing list for details about that workshop by emailing: admin@okanaganxeriscape.org

Our executive-director Signe Kendrick works tirelessly to inform your community about ways to conserve our precious water by following the principles of xeriscape in creating beautiful landscapes to make the community a wonderful place to live.

Read her Gardening with Nature column in local media such as Castanet and Black Press newspapers and blogs on our website. Her column every two weeks on Castanet has been viewed by more than 180,000 in the past year, nearly 7,000 views per column.

Win a gift certificate for your membership in OXA



Names of all new and renewing members of OXA will be included in a draw for a $50 gift certificate for plants at the spring OXA plant sale.

Deadline for the contest is Mar. 14, and the winner will be announced in time to receive your gift at the plant sale in early May.

As well as the importance of your financial support of OXA through the purchase of a membership, there are many benefits of membership, including discounts at most nurseries in the Okanagan Valley; early access to the annual plant sales in spring and fall; and a reduction in the cost of xeriscape courses.

For details, go to: https://okanaganxeriscape.org/about-us/join-oxa/

Come to the professionals' workshop on climate-resilient landscaping

OXA is excited to present a full-day horticulture professionals' workshop on Friday, Feb. 28, 2025. The focus is Creating Climate-Resilient Landscapes and there will be an impressive line-up of speakers.

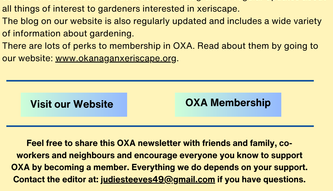
Sigire Kendrick will kick the day off with an early-morning session on the principles of xeriscape; then Anna Warwick-Sears, executive-director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will launch the main part of the day. Our other speakers include:

- Shauna Burnell (Waterkind)
- Dennis Craig (Kelowna Fire Department - FireSmart)
- Gordon Hiebert (Cabin Forestry)
- Ashlee Hignell (Foxglove Nursery)
- Mario Lanthier (Crop Health Advising & Research)
- Robert Hogue (Pegasus Horticulture)
- Stephanie Aitken (Urban Systems)

The workshop page with all the speaker information and event details will be up on the OXA website in early January and tickets will go on sale then. We are able to offer this full-day workshop at the low price of $55 due to the tremendous support from our partners: the Okanagan Basin Water Board and the City of Kelowna (including the City of Kelowna Fire Dept). We have additional industry sponsors who will be profiled in our marketing and at the event.

Participants who are members of OXA will pay a reduced price of $50 to attend.

This event is not restricted to industry professionals - anyone with a keen interest in Creating Climate-Resilient Landscapes is welcome to buy a ticket. Please watch our social media for the ticketing link.



Xeriscape Comments or Questions?

If you have experienced a great success or a bit of a failure in your xeriscape efforts, feel free to help fellow xeriscape enthusiasts by sharing your experience.

Please go to the member section of the OXA website. There you can fill in a request form to comment or ask questions about xeriscape issues you've come across. You will notice the other exclusive member opportunity in this section - you can request a visit to your home using our Garden Mentor program. https://okanaganxeriscape.org/about-us/member-area/

All of us can learn so much from each other, so sharing our successes and disappointments helps everyone.

Join us on social media on Facebook and Instagram for regular updates about all things of interest to gardeners interested in xeriscape.

The blog on our website is also regularly updated and includes a wide variety of information about gardening.

There are lots of perks to membership in OXA. Read about them by going to our website: www.okanaganxeriscape.org.

Visit our Website | OXA Membership

Feel free to share this OXA newsletter with friends and family, co-workers and neighbours and encourage everyone you know to support OXA by becoming a member. Everything we do depends on your support. Contact the editor at: judiesteeves49@gmail.com if you have questions.

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is a not-for-profit organization formed in 2009 to provide information on gardening with nature, or xeriscape, for those living in the Okanagan.

In collaboration with the Okanagan Basin Water Board
Make Water Work Program

Visit our Website | Visit our Website

STAY CONNECTED