

Landscaping For Water Conservation

A well-designed landscape not only adds beauty to your home, it can help reduce your water use, improve your home's comfort and lower your energy bills all year long.

Explore xeriscape design and you'll discover that this type of garden style is not only environmentally friendly but one that is overflowing with head-turning good looks. Many homeowners confuse xeriscape with zero-scape, thinking that choosing a xeriscaped yard means accenting mostly hardscape with a few plants. That's not the case at all! Yards that embrace xeriscape ideas actually feature all manner of plants and garden styles, even cottage gardens. The term simply refers to a landscape that minimizes water use. Some proven tactics on water conservation are:

Ten relatively easy tips to help conserve water in your landscape are:

1. Select plants appropriately. Base your plant selections on those that will flourish in our regional climate. Seek out Oklahoma Proven plants for the best success.
2. Always group plants together that have similar water needs.
3. Choose vining vegetable crops like cucumbers, assorted melons, summer and winter squash. They require less water than many other vegetables, and watering is only critical during their flowering and fruiting stages. The same goes for eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes.
4. A lawn easily ranks as #1 in water consumption in the average landscape. Consider limiting turf areas and replant with grasses that survive solely on rainfall, and/or use low-water requiring turf grass. Contact the Tulsa OSU Extension Office for proper turf selections for our area.
5. Aerate your soil, as it improves water flow to plants' roots and enables soil to better absorb water and nutrients which encourages deeper roots.

6. Use drip irrigation. These systems deliver water directly to the root zone and nowhere else. They can be readily found both in stores and online, and are quite easy to install. Watering the root system versus the foliage has many advantages, including both efficient water usage and minimization of foliage mold and other diseases.
7. Collect rainwater from roofs via guttering into rain barrels or similar apparatuses. Reuse any old water that is not high in sodium and salts.
8. Water only in the early mornings when it is cooler, less windy and evaporation rates are low. Avoid watering in the late evening as wet leaves lingering into nighttime invite diseases.
9. Raise your lawnmower cutting height as it gets warmer. Longer grass blades help shade each other and retain more water. Generally speaking, root depth is proportional to grass blade height. That is, the higher the blade height, the deeper the roots, which will survive drought conditions much better.
10. Use mulch to keep plant roots cool, minimize evaporation, prevent soil from crusting and reduce weed growth.

On average, a well-designed landscape saves enough water and energy to pay for itself in less than 8 years. Remember, it's never too late to make your landscape beautiful and water/energy efficient!