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The Word is Xeriscape, Not Zero Scape!

When installing a new landscape, consider the benefits an environmentally friendly xeriscape. First, let's get something straight. The word is xeriscape, not "zeroscape." And having a xeriscape does not mean that your landscape is a desert of rocks and cactus devoid of colorful flowers! Xeriscapes are so misunderstood.



The term xeriscape evolved from the Greek word xeros, meaning dry, and the word landscape. What is it? It is synonymous with water-efficient landscaping that utilizes regional plants to create well-conceived, planet-friendly and beautiful outdoor environments. It is NOT the absence of vegetation or "zero" plant life.

The ultimate goal of a xeriscape is water savings. Water availability is critical in Texas as the burgeoning population puts higher demands on the already limited supply of high-quality water. Little can be done by the average person to combat the stressors of drought and population growth. However, people have the ability to minimize the water they expend to maintain home landscapes.

Xeriscape landscaping incorporates seven basic principles that lead to water savings: planning and design, soil analysis, practical turf areas, appropriate plant selection, efficient irrigation, use of mulch and appropriate maintenance. Considering that lawns require more water and maintenance than most other landscape plants, reducing the amount of turfgrass is a critical component of any xeriscape plan.

Instead of lawn, increase landscape beds and hardscape areas, such as walkways. Base plant selections primarily on their ability to adapt to the region's climate and your site's characteristics, such as elevation changes, soil type and pH, and amount of sun, shade or wind. When reviewing plants, carefully evaluate their water demands given your site. Native plants

generally have lower water demands, fewer pest problems and less fertilizer needs than others. For appearance sakes, also consider any existing trees or shrubs and the natural surroundings. All plantings should complement each other.

According to horticulturists at Texas A&M, a well-designed xeriscape combined with a water-efficient irrigation system can decrease maintenance by as much as 50 percent. To maintain their health and best appearance, xeriscapes typically require annual mulching in landscape beds and elimination of weak plants. Mowing is dramatically reduced. And chemical controls are minimized, reducing environmental risks.

For answers to your horticulture questions, please call the Texas AgriLife Extension, Hood County at 817-579-3280 or go online to visit lakegranburymastergardeners.org.