

DIY Projects Xeriscape Landscaping



**Introducing an Easy
Step-By-Step Guide to Create
Your Dream Landscape**

Lori Kelly

DIY Projects

Xeriscape Landscaping



**Introducing an Easy
Step-By-Step Guide to Create
Your Dream Xeriscape Landscape**

Lori Kelly

All rights reserved. No part of this book can be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the author.

This book is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. You cannot resell it or give it away for free. Thank you for respecting Lori Kelly's work.

Introduction

What is xeriscape landscaping? A landscape design using native plants that require very little water and maintenance.

There are many places in the US experiencing drought conditions. In some areas, the drought is severe and in other areas, people never thought they'd have to worry about a drought. In Las Vegas, Nevada, the city passed a law prohibiting planting grass in the front yards of new homes. The water authority offers rebates to residents who remove grass and replace it with native landscaping.

Now water authorities all across the US are following suit. They're offering residents rebates to remove water-thirsty grass and plant native landscape. Water is a precious resource and with the lack of rain and inadequate infrastructures, it will continue to be a concern. And not just for the US, but all over the world.

More people than ever before are taking steps to live green and one of the easiest ways to start is with a xeriscape landscape. Contrary to what many people believe, a xeriscape landscape can be beautiful. There is a wide variety of plants, materials and hardscapes that will make your xeriscape landscape spectacular. Whether you're starting with a clean slate or redoing your existing landscape, you too can have a gorgeous, low maintenance, xeriscape landscape.

Chapter 1

Developing a Plan

1 - Set a Budget. When you know how much you want to spend, you'll be prepared to choose your landscape elements accordingly. Itemize your list and always plan for incidentals. If a pipe breaks during the construction process, or an area looks sparse and you want to add more plants, you'll know you have a reserve for unexpected expenses.

2 - Take a Drive. Drive around the uninhabited areas where you live and take photographs of the plants you like. You can also get ideas by checking out other landscapes in your area and online.

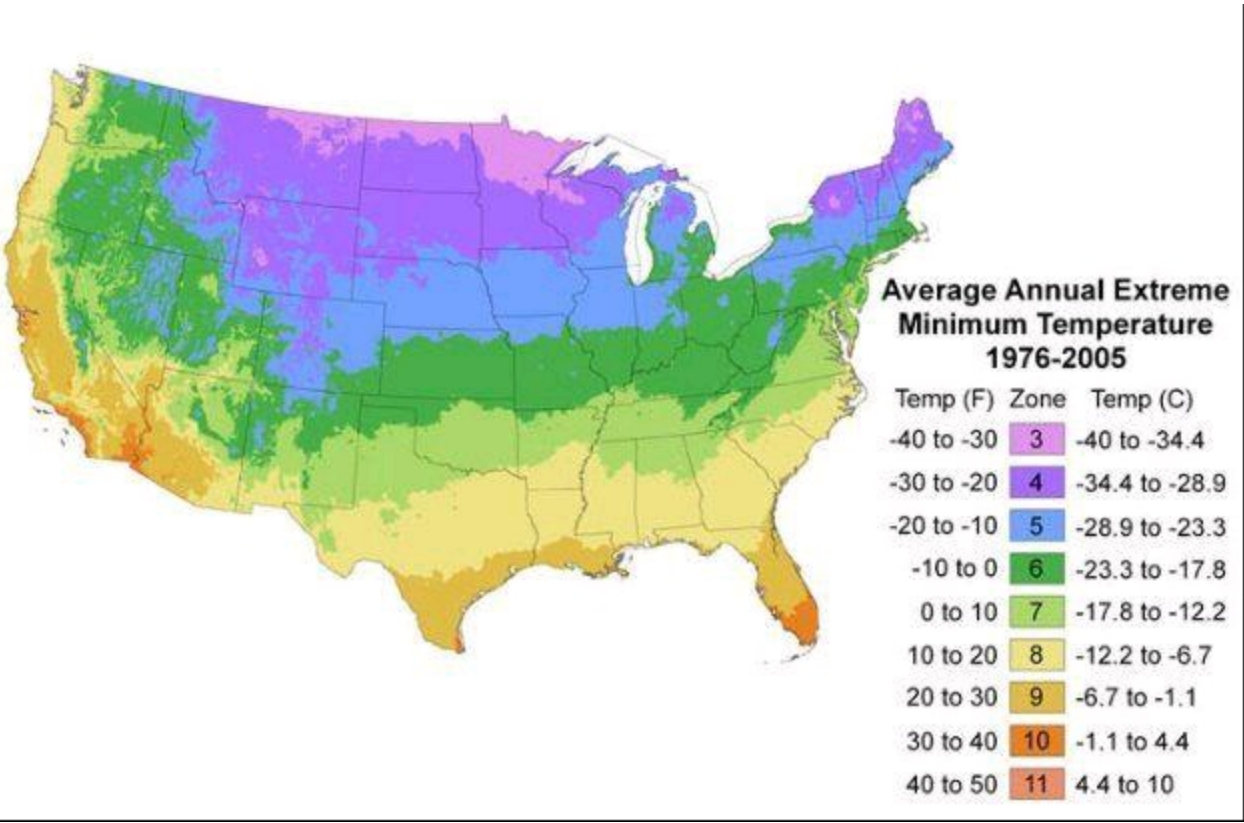
3 - Visit Local Nurseries. Be sure to bring a notebook and your photographs with you. Ask the nursery personnel to show you drought tolerant plants. Most of the plants are in one or five gallon containers. To get an idea of what the plants will look like when they mature, look at the ones in the nursery that have matured. A plant that is in a small container might fit into your design now, but knowing how big it will get in the future will ensure you give it the space it needs.

While you're at the nursery, take a look at the types of mulch. There are many choices, from rubber to crushed or decomposed granite, rock, bark, recycled glass, and several types of soil. Rubber is a new design product and becoming very popular due to the fact that it won't disintegrate - go into the ground and need to be replaced.

One of the most common elements in a xeriscape landscape is decomposed granite or DG. DG looks like really small, crushed rocks in a reddish-brown color. As it breaks down in the landscape, it sparkles in the sun. Crushed granite is another good choice for xeriscaping. The rocks are bigger than DG and resemble gravel. Make a note of the prices. Shop around before you buy your ground cover. Rock and stone dealers might be able to offer you a better price than the nursery. If you're ordering a large amount of cover, it's easy to have it delivered. If you spend a good amount of money at the nursery or the rock yard, ask for free delivery. You might not get it, but it doesn't hurt to ask.

4 - Make a List. Make a list of the plants you like and use categories to get it organized. On a piece of paper, create 5 columns. Write the name of the plant in the first column, the color in the next column, the blooming season, the amount of sunlight required, and any notes you want in the last column (i.e. cost, height at maturity, attracts hummingbirds, deer-proof, attracts butterflies, etc.).

5 - Know Your Zone. Each part of the US is separated into zones. Here's a map:



Have fun with this project. Add colors you like and don't be afraid to use your personality. Buy a cheap set of color pencils. Use different colors for plants, grass, trees, hardscape structures (decks, patios, paths), and the irrigation system.

Chapter 2

Planning Your Design

A. Existing Elements

Draw a sketch of your existing landscape/yard. It doesn't have to be anything fancy, you can use a plain piece of paper or graph paper and draw it to scale. It helps to draw your design to scale because you'll be able to see if it has the right balance. On graph paper, you can use one square to represent one foot. Make a note of any existing plants, trees and shrubs. Also note any patios, paths or decks (hardscapes).

B. Drainage

When it's raining, make a note of how the water drains. You might have an area in the front yard where water collects because it's at a lower elevation than the rest of the yard. Knowing the elevations will help you plan what works best in those areas.

C. Sun/Shade

Draw directions on your design: East, West, North and South on your design. You'll need to know which areas get morning and afternoon sun. (The sun rises in the East and sets in the West.) Also make a note of any shady areas in your yard. You might have large trees that shade specific areas of your yard or a neighbor's wall that blocks out sunlight. When you know the sunny and shady areas of your yard, you'll be planting the appropriate plants or hardscape elements.

D. Grass

If have pets and/or kids, you're going to want some grass. There are many different types of grass. Find a drought tolerant grass that grows well in your area. Grass that requires a small amount of water won't grow fast and therefore, requires less mowing or weed eating.

Ready to rip some of that grass out? Awesome! Replace grass with a flower bed, a rock garden, a dry creek bed, or hardscape element (deck, patio, path, arbor, etc.). If you have an irrigation system to water your grass, it will need to be removed or redesigned to accommodate your new design.

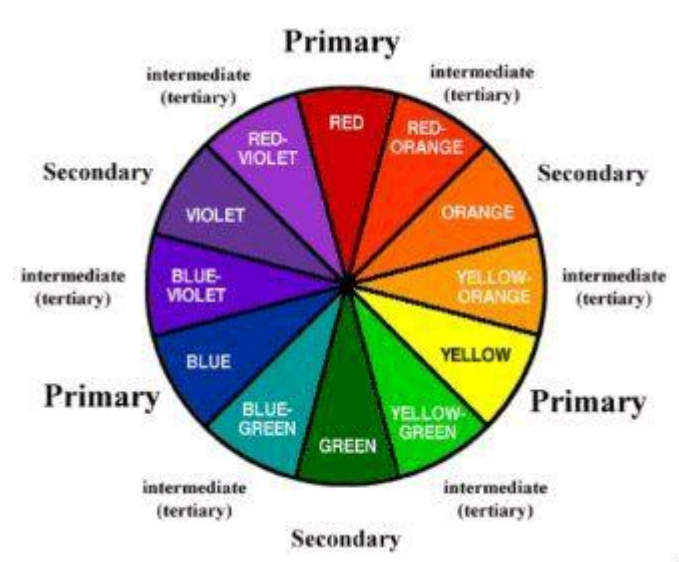
Chapter 3 Plants

There are many choices of xeriscape plants. You can find flowers, shrubs, trees, and ground cover - everything you need to create a beautiful xeriscape landscape. You can buy plants at your local nursery, online, and ask your neighbors, family and friends for clippings. Nurseries and online stores sell seeds so you can start your own plants for a low cost. You can also ask your neighbors for clippings. One of my neighbors had Lantana growing like crazy in their yard. They were more than happy to give me some of their Lantana, free. Don't be afraid to ask your neighbors for clippings. It's a great conversation starter and a wonderful way to get to know your neighbors.

Keep in mind that perennials will cost more than annuals. If you cannot remember the difference between an annual and a perennial, just remember that annual means a year. That means annual plants will last about a year. Perennials will last longer than a year. Planting perennials means that you won't be replacing the plants every year.

A. Colors

What are your favorite colors? If you're going to spend time, money and labor creating a xeriscape landscape, use colors you like. Some colors won't look good next to each other. Here's a color wheel to help you coordinate the colors of your plants.



General rule of thumb, colors next to each other on the color wheel go together. And colors directly across from each other go together. Here's some ideas for some drought tolerant plants. Know your zone to make sure you choose the best flowers for your area.

B. Drought Tolerant Flowers

When you're planning a flower garden - any area with flowers, be sure to plant taller ones in the back and shorter ones in front. When the flowers reach maturity, the maximum height, you want to see all the flowers. Keeping the bloom season in mind will allow your landscape to have color all year long. Drought tolerant plants might not be drought tolerant in the beginning. They need a little love and could require rich soil and extra water until they become drought-tolerant.

Here are some photos and descriptions of drought tolerant flowers. The photo appears first followed by the description.



Blue Salvia - this is a common plant here in Texas. The gorgeous blue blooms look like spikes. The green leaves are rounded. It needs very little water, can withstand the ridiculous heat in Texas (we had months in 100+ degrees the last few Summers), attracts bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies.

Zones: 4-8

Height: About 2 feet.

Blooms: Spring through Fall.

Lighting: Full to partial sun.

Pair with: Buttercups, Agaves, or any yellow flowering plant.



Black Eyed Susan - Rudbeckia hirta. Very pretty flowers best planted in large, open areas. They grow fast, large yellow flowers with a dark center (black eye).

Zones: 3-11

Height: 2 - 10 feet (depending on the variety)

Blooms: Summer to Fall.

Lighting: sun to partial shade.

Pair with: Reddish, brown ornamental grass, succulent with a variegated leaf in red or yellow.



Buttercups - A beautiful butter, yellow color. When you want to create a dry creek bed or cover a large area, this is a great choice. When planted in a large area, they look like a flowing river. You might have seen these when you take a country drive and yellow flowers are scattered on the horizon. The flower looks like a loose rose bloom. They do well in many different types of soil.

Zone: 8-11

Height: two feet.

Blooms: Summer to Fall.

Lighting: Full to partial sun.

Pair with: blue, yellow or red flowers.



Calibrachoa - Colors are orange, yellow and pink. The blooms are really pretty and about an inch in diameter. They love full sun. A great choice for containers, rock gardens or flower beds. I like using these along a driveway, a path or a border in a flower bed. They spread out like ground cover.

Zone: 3-11

Height: 10-12 inches.

Blooms: Late in the Spring through Fall.

Lighting: Full to partial sun

Pair with: blues, reds, oranges, whites.



Chrysanthemum - You can't go wrong with a Chrysanthemum. Great cut flowers too. A variety of colors, yellow, red and white. Great container plant or use in a flower bed or rock garden.

Zone: 5-9

Height: Up to 3 feet.

Blooms: Late Summer through Fall.

Lighting: Full to partial sun

Pair with: Ornamental grass (brown or green), variegated plants with red or yellow leaves.



Gazania - Great for hot areas. The blooms resemble daisies. They last all Summer. The leaves are full, green with rounded edges. This is a great choice for a rock garden or use in flower beds, borders, ground cover or in containers. The blooms stay open day and night.

Zone: 8-10

Height: up to one foot.

Blooms: Early Summer to late Fall.

Lighting: Full sun

Pair with: You can get really creative. Pinks, reds, oranges, yellows.



Lantana - One of my favorites. They grow like weeds. Great groundcover or border plant. Plant them around trees, along driveways or any hardscape area to soften it. If you have grass, plant them around the perimeter of the grass and you won't need to weed eat anymore. Don't worry about cutting them when you mow, they'll come back.

Zone: 2-11

Height: Up to 3' (depending on the type)

Blooms: Summer to Fall

Lighting: Full to partial sun

Pair with: Depends on the color you get. Yellow Lantana, pair with any pink, orange, red, white.



Little Ruby Dwarf Alternanthera. With its dark burgundy leaves, it tolerates full sun or does well in partial shade. A real show stopper. Makes a great mix in a container too.

Zone: 8-10

Height: About 14 inches.

Blooms: Spring to Fall.

Lighting: Partial sun, partial shade

Pair with: Yellow, purple and pink.



Mexican Blue Sage or *Salvia chamaedryoides*. These look great next to red rocks. Pretty blue flowers with a sage green/silvery stem and leaves. They do well as a border plant or plant them in a container. Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. Be careful with the Germander sage, it spreads fast.

- Zones: 7-11
- Height: 1-3 feet
- Blooms: Summer
- Lighting: Full and partial sun
- Pair with: Agave or ornamental grasses.



Red Fury Mandevilla - Breathtakingly gorgeous. A flowering vine that does well in full sun. Great choice to plant next to a balcony, an arbor, lattice, any place you want a vine to climb. Cut them down to keep them closer to the ground.

- Zone: 10-11
- Height: 3'
- Blooms: Spring through Fall.
- Lighting: Full to partial sun
- Pair with: Great as a show stopper, on their own.



Shasta Daisy. Pretty white petals with a gold center. Great cut flowers and a welcome addition to any flower bed. Use it as a border plant, in a rock garden, use your imagination.

- Zone: 5-8
- Height: 3-6 feet
- Blooms: Summer to Fall
- Lighting: Full sun to partial shade
- Pair with: Purple leaf shrubs (in the back, daisies in the front).



Verbena - another one of my favorites. They can take the heat but they also do well in partial sun. They spread like a wildfire but don't mind it if you cut them way back. They grow like a weed with very little water. Use this as a ground cover. A great choice for the edges of a flower bed (border), around trees, any place where grass meets an area you don't want to weed eat. Give it plenty of room to spread its love.

- Zone: 7-9
- Height: About 9-18 inches (spreads, plan accordingly).
- Blooms: Summer through Fall.
- Lighting: Full to partial sun.
- Pair with: Yellow or pink.



Vinca Minor and Major - This is one of the best drought tolerant plants you can buy. I've seen it do well in many different zones. Colors vary. They are very hardy, love the sun but do well in partial shade. Large blooms, up to 2" in diameter. Use Great for borders, containers, groundcover, rock gardens and flower beds.

- Zone: 4-9
- Height: 12"
- Blooms: Spring to Fall.
- Lighting: Full sun, partial sun, partial shade
- Pair with: (depends on which one you choose).



Zinnias - Vibrant blooms in a wide variety of colors. I like to use these in groups as borders. Planted at the edge of a garden, a natural barrier. They're a good choice to start from seeds, stand up well to mildew as well, blooms best in the Summer.

- Zones: 2-11
- Height: 1-4 feet
- Blooms: Summer to Fall.
- Lighting: Full to partial sun

Pair with: Use your imagination. Zinnias have many colors. Find a flower or shrub in your favorite color and pair it up.

C. Drought Tolerant Shrubs



Berberis - With purple leaves during spring through Fall, then turning a fire scarlet color at the end of Fall. Deer don't like this shrub so it's a good choice if deer are a problem in your area. Also does well in poor soil conditions. Maximum height, 2'. Zones 1, 2, 3 and 4.



Burning Bush - a popular shrub that turns bright red in the Fall (the fire red looks like it's burning). It grows fast so make sure you give it plenty of room. It makes a great choice for a privacy border, getting up to five feet in height. Zones 1-4. Good in full sun but also thrives in the shade. The berries in the winter make this a great choice for a lovely year-round shrub.



Butterfly Bush - Buddlei. Great shrub to attract butterflies. Available in a variety of heights and flower colors (blue, orange, yellow and red). Easy to grow and a good choice for late season colors. Use it as a hedge or a natural privacy screen. Hardy to Zone 5 and ranging in height from 3-10 feet.



Cotoneaster horizontalis - fast spreading, low growing groundcover shrub that works extremely well for slopes & soil erosion control. It thrives in exposed windy areas and good for areas on the coast and heavily populated cities. The foliage is shiny green with orange berries during the winter. Height, about 2 feet and works well to Zone 4.



Nandina - Nice, year round color. Plant next to other flowers or shrubs that go dormant during the winter. Green pointy leaves in the Spring and Summer, red leaves in the Winter and Fall. An added benefit of red berries that appear at the end of Fall and last all winter. Height: 2 feet. Does great in full sun or partial shade. Texas deer won't eat Nandina.



Plum Yew - A slow growing conifer with pointed leaves that get to about one inch long. You can shape a Plum Yew, making it a good choice to balance a landscape. Plant at the back of a flower bed, with smaller flowering plants in front. Good in zones 6-9.



Privet - This is one of my go-to plants. Super easy to grow and stays green all year long in warmer climates. A really good natural barrier. It does well in poor soil conditions, like sandy or clay. Prune it to display whatever shape your heart desires. It loves full sun and that's when it produces its best color. Be careful, they can get out of hand. Be sure to prune them to control the size. They work especially well in a formal garden, as a border along a driveway (soften the hardscape) or block out an eye sore. Grows about 12 feet in height, but you can cut it down to a few feet and she won't mind at all.



Red Tip Photinia - good choice for a natural privacy border. Another one of my favorite go-to plants. I use this to create a natural border between neighbors. This baby grows fast, green leaves that turn red in the Fall and winter. Requires very, very little water. Height and spread: 10-15'. Zones: 8 and 9. Make sure you plan plenty of room to let this shrub spread its branches.



Texas Sage. Love this. Use it to create a natural barrier. Or define a property line. Height 1-3 feet, spreads 1-2 feet. Zones 8, 9, and 10. Does well in full sun and can be used in partial shade.



Viburnum - Many varieties. Bright white flowers with a treat of red berries and red Fall color. A good choice to plant next to a fence (soften the hardscape). Good in congested cities since it thrives in polluted atmospheres. Grows 4-15 feet in height, about the same in width. Zones 2-9. Does well in full to partial sun.



Yellow Bells. A popular choice for Texas landscapes. A shrub that grows to about 6 feet in height. Zones, 8-10, grows well in full sun or partial sun. Super easy to grow and vibrant yellow.

D. Succulents

A xeriscape landscape isn't complete without succulents. They add color, texture and require very little water and little to no maintenance. Have you seen succulents planted vertically? It's totally awesome. You can buy boxes that attach to a wall (think ugly concrete or stucco wall, side of garage, etc.), put some succulents in the boxes and they thrive. Succulents work well in containers, rock gardens, flower beds, and around trees.

Succulents thrive in just about any climate but do the best in dry, hot climates. They can be planted directly in your garden or in pots and containers. Succulents are unique plants because they take water and store it in the root system, stems and leaves. It's this ability - storing water - that makes them a good choice for a xeriscape landscape. Succulents are a great choice for people who have trouble keeping plants alive.

Here's a few succulents you might like. Let's grow.

Abrometiella Chlorantha - Deuterocohnia.



This particular succulent is good for ground cover or a good choice to cover a fairly large area. With its tiny heads that resemble rose buds with a gray/green color. Spiky leaves. It works well in flower beds or create a focal point by planting it in three pots of varying sizes as a center piece on an outdoor table.

Agaves



There are about 200+ varieties of Agaves. Many of them have spiky leaves, and some with thorns at the ends of the leaves. Be sure to check your local nursery or go online and take a look at all the varieties and the ones that will suit your area and style in your landscape. One of the most common varieties is the albomarginata. The leaves grow to 3 feet long, perhaps longer in certain climates. Have small thorns on the leaves and if you've gardened around these, you know how sharp the thorns are. Luckily, these require very little maintenance.

Brometiella Lorentziana - Deuterocohnia.



The leaves are a bit smoother than the Chlorantha. The tips of the leaves are spiked, they have a

silver color. They do well just about anywhere. Consider planting them between rocks. Rocks that are red in color are a great backdrop to accentuate the silver color of this beauty.

Agave Americana



We have a bunch of these in Texas. Small thorns on the leaves (they hurt), height up to 7 feet. Be sure to plant succulents with thorns in an area that needs little to no maintenance.

Agave Attenuata also known as a fox tail agave.



Large rose like leaves that grow about 2 feet in length and about 6 inches wide. The tips of the leaves are smooth, making it a good choice to plant next to paths or any place in your landscape where people will be walking or sitting. They have a light yellow spiky flower that curves. Doesn't do well if you live in an area that freezes (hates frost).

Agave Bovicornuta or Cow's Horn Agave.



Wide leaves that grow to 6-8 inches wide and around 2 feet in length. Sharp thorns on the ends of leaves. These look great in a rock garden.

Spider Agave (agave gracteosa).



With its gently flowing leaves, this is another good choice for planting next to a path or walkway. Put it in a rock garden, flower bed, dry creek bed, just about anywhere. Produces light yellow or white flowers.

Agave Toumeyana v. bella or miniature Century Plant



The miniature century plant (pictured above) works well in small areas. Plant them between rocks for a splash of green. They grow to about 4 or 5 feet wide. The leaves are adorned with white stripes with short white threads that hang off them. A good potted plant too. Zones 5-10.

Donkey's Tail (sedum morganianum)



A popular selection for hanging pots since the plant grows in a vine-like design, trailing. Although it doesn't like extreme heat, you can plant it in containers to enhance patios, balconies and decks. Does the best in partial shade. It will grow to about 2 feet in length and about 1 foot wide.

Firesticks (Euphorbia tirucalli 'Rosea')



Talk about adding a pop to your garden. Firesticks love full sun and are hardy in zones 9-11. They get about 3 feet in height and 2 feet wide. The firestick stays a green, dull orange until it hits winter time and gets fired up. Use this when planning colors for an all season garden. Put this on your list for awesome winter color.

Iceplants



Plant ice plants on slopes and turn an ordinary slope into a master creation. There are many varieties and colors of ice plants. Check your local nursery to find out which ones do well in your area.

Echeveria



Echeveria is the botanical name used to identify approximately 150 types of succulent plants. One of the most commonly used is called hens and chicks. These plants are perfect for a xeriscape garden. You can plant them in clusters and they do well in zones 9-11. They can also be grown indoors.

Paddle Plant



This beauty grows to about a foot tall and wide. Very popular with its flat leaves that resemble a paddle that grow to form a rose-type top. When this plant produces flowers, cut the stem and you'll have off shoots that you can remove and plant. That's a good thing since the Paddle Plant lasts only about a year, but if you save the offsets or the shoots and replant them, you can enjoy these for many years. Does well in containers or use them in your flower beds.

Ocotillo



Love this in a xeriscape landscape. It could take a few years for Ocotillos to mature and bloom. When first planted, spray the canes with water when it gets hot. An Ocotillo's root system needs help to have an established root system. Many landscapes in the west use Ocotillos to create a natural fence or barrier.

E. Drought Tolerant Trees

Planting trees in a xeriscape landscape is very important. Trees will provide natural shade for flowers and plants.

Palm Trees



No xeriscape landscape is complete without some palm trees. The fan palm is a favorite choice since it requires very little water and maintenance. Check out your local nursery to find out the variety of palm trees that grow the best in your neck of the woods.

Live Oak



Oak trees are everywhere here in Central Texas. They are beautiful and provide much needed shade in our sizzling summers. Check with your local nursery to make sure they'll survive in your area. Full sun, 25-60 feet in height, 40-60 feet wide, and evergreen.

Crape Myrtle



I love this tree. They're very common here in Texas. Height: 15-30 feet, spreads about the same

distance. Zones 7, 8, and 9.

Desert Willow



Attracts butterflies and birds. Height: 10-15 feet, same spread. Zones: 7, 8, and 9. Full sun, low maintenance.

Bottle Brush



Full sun, height 8-12 feet. Spreads 6-8 feet. Evergreen, red blooms, but a bit messy. The red blooms shed.

Mesquite Tree



Super drought tolerant. 20-30 feet in height, has a very deep root system. Don't plant these right next to your house. Zones 7-10.

Texas Red Bud



Full sun to partial shade. Height, 12-20 feet, spreads the same. Pink and purple flowers in the spring, Purple berries in the winter. Zone 8. Check with your nursery to check the variety of red buds available in your area.

E. Drought Tolerant Grasses

Let's get dirty. And remove some grass. If you have grass and want to remove it, you can do it the old-fashioned way with a pick and a shovel. Or you can rent a sod cutter from a local tool rental store. Another idea is to use a large piece of plastic and secure it over the grass area. The grass will die. Layers of newspaper with at least six inches of compost on top of the newspaper will also do the trick. The soil under the grass should be in good shape, just till it (break it up using a shovel, rake or pick). If you want a small patch of grass for the kids and/or dogs, use a drought tolerant grass - one that requires little water and maintenance. Here's some tips.

Bahia grass - This is a great choice for poor soil. Bahia grass needs full sun.

Bermuda grass - It loves sun and is a good choice for heavy traffic. But know that it will need

frequent mowing. There are different varieties of Bermuda grass. check with your local nursery to find the best drought-tolerant variety.

Buffalo grass - great for areas in the Midwest. Buffalo needs full sun and does not do as well in lots of traffic. It works best in a warm climate but can also live through cold water. It grows slow and many varieties are drought tolerant.

Fescues - this is known as a cool season grass. Usually used in the Northern part of the US.

St. Augustine grass - Many St. Augustine grasses are not drought tolerant, but there are varieties like Floratam that don't need much water.

Zoysia grass - this grass works well in both shady and sunny conditions. It grows slow and stands up well to traffic. The grass is lush and green, just make sure you choose a variety that is drought tolerant.

Chapter 4

Irrigation/Sprinkler Systems

You can water your xeriscape landscape by hand, using a rain catching system, a system that attaches to the hose, or installing an automatic irrigation system.

Watering by hand takes some time depending on the size of your yard. I enjoy hand watering some areas using a hose. I find it enjoyable to be outside and it's a good stress-reliever. Some of the elements in a xeriscape garden will only need water one or two times a month. Those are the areas you might want to consider hand watering.

A rain catching system will also reduce your water consumption. There are many kits available at your local hardware store. They're easy to install and can be used as your only method of water (depending on how much rain your area gets) or in conjunction with other watering/irrigation systems. Before you use a rain catching system, check with your local and state laws first. I was surprised to learn there are many places in the US that prohibit the use of rain catching systems.

You can buy a drip irrigation kit that simply attaches to the hose. Following the instructions on the kit, assemble the drip assembly, place the system where you want it to water, and turn the hose on. The photo below is a kit you can buy at Lowe's for a reasonable price.



An automatic irrigation system is a great feature. You can leave for the weekend and not worry about your landscape dying. It also saves time. No more hand watering or dragging a sprinkler around. Some systems offer a feature that knows when it rains so your system won't come on. Your irrigation system should be designed to distribute water effectively to your new plants and grass. Your plants should be watered using a drip system while your grass will need sprinkler heads.

A. Installing a Drip Irrigation System

A drip irrigation system is a low pressure system that uses very little water. A flex pipe goes from the valves to the areas that need water. A drip line comes off the flex pipe and then an emitter is attached to a drip line that comes off the main hose or flex pipe.

The sharp point on the emitter is what snaps into the drip line. Secure the drip line with the emitter attached using stakes. Position the stakes as close as possible to the plants. Some emitters drip while other emitters spray. There is a variety of emitters you can choose from. Installing your own irrigation system can save you hundreds, possibly thousands of dollars.

Below is a photograph of some of the parts of a drip irrigation system. The line that is on the right side is the drip line. To the left, the long pointed pieces are the stakes that secure the drip line next to the plants. The kits come with instructions and explain the different parts. Don't let it intimidate you. You can do it!



Many nurseries will help you design an automatic irrigation system, free. Check with your local

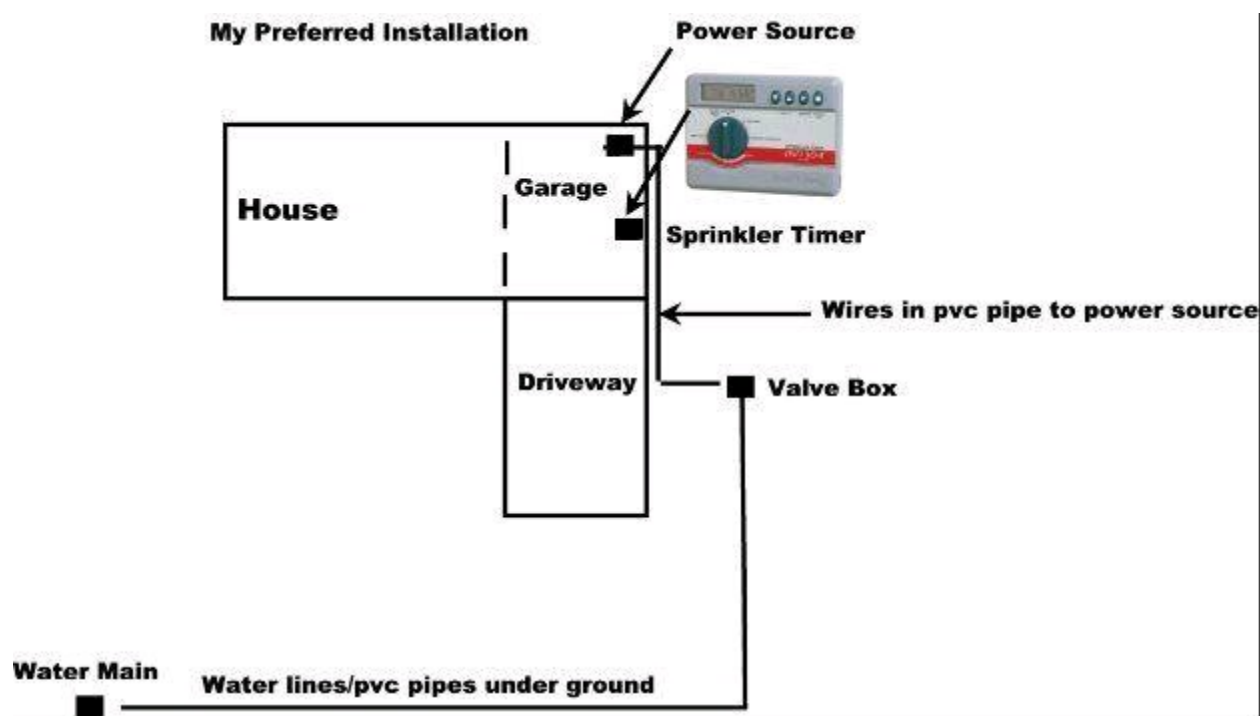
nursery to find out if they'll help you with the design. The reason it's free is because they want you to buy all the supplies from them.

One of the most difficult steps in installing a new irrigation system is hooking up to the main water source and installing the valve system. Installing the valve system requires wiring the valves to a power source, and to an automatic timer or box. You might want to consider hiring someone to install the valve box and wire it.

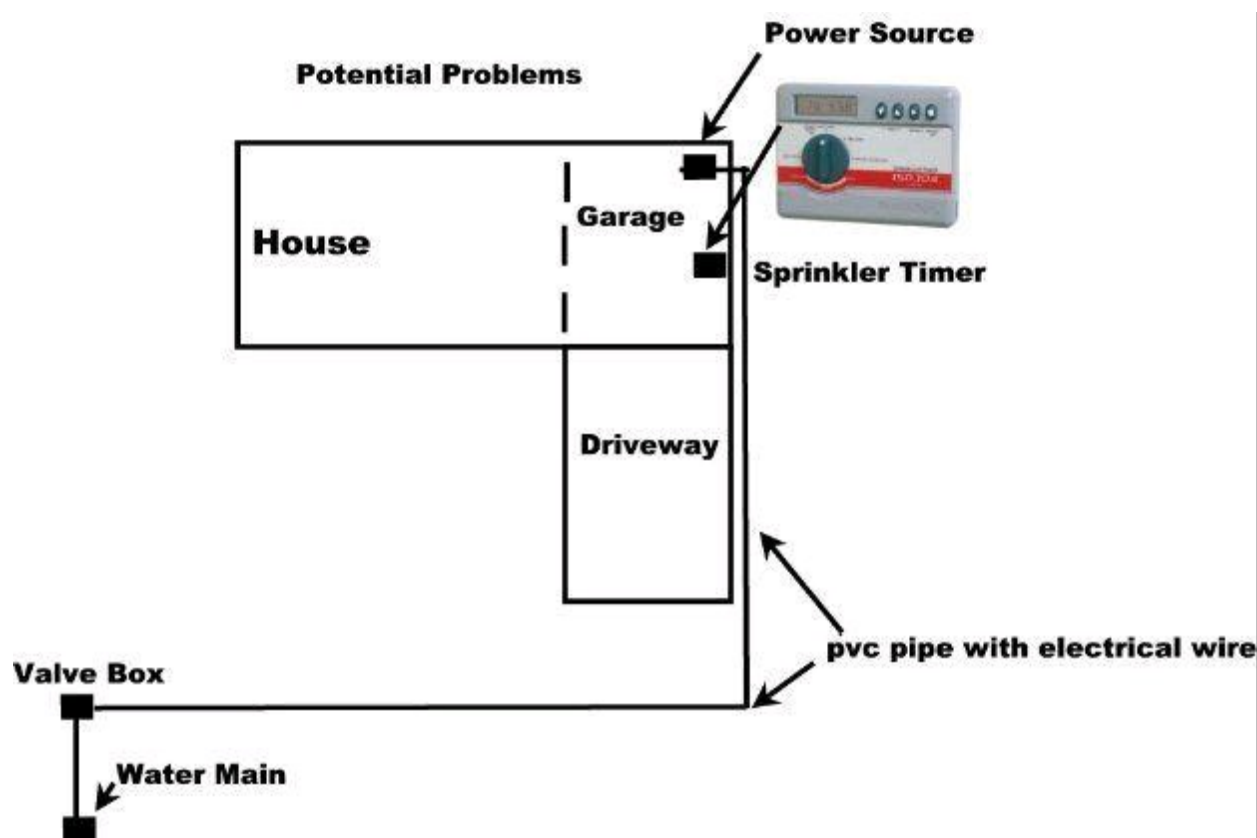
When I install a new irrigation system, I prefer to install the valve box as close as possible to my power source. Even if the main water source is a long distance to the location of the valve box.

Some people prefer the opposite - installing the valve box close to the main water source and running the electrical wires from the valve box to the power supply.

Over the years, I have learned it's much easier to repair an electrical problem if the wires are as close as possible to the valve box. Here's a diagram of my preferred design. Notice the location of the power source to the valve box. The wires are underground inside a pvc pipe. If there's a wiring problem, I don't have much pipe to dig up to find the problem.



Now here's a design showing an installation placing the valve box near the main water supply. With the valve box so far away from a power or electrical source, wire has to be run underground in conduit or pvc pipe. If there's a short or problem with the wiring, look how much pipe I have to dig up to find the problem.



If this part (hooking to main and installing valve system) is something you don't want to do, hire a landscape contractor and you can handle the rest - running your irrigation lines and installing sprinkler and bubbler heads. You can do it, just plan to spend a weekend or two (depending on the size of your yard) digging trenches, laying pipes, and installing the heads.

1. Check your water pressure. You'll need a pressure gauge. You can buy one at a local hardware store. The gauge attaches to an outside water spigot. Turn off all the water in the house, the washing machine, make sure no one is taking a shower, etc. Attach the gauge, turn the water on and make a note of how much pressure you have. The pressure is in a psi reading or pounds per square inch.
2. Main Water Source. You'll be installing your irrigation system by tying into the main water source. Your main water source is usually located at the front of your yard. I say usually, but depending on where you live, it could be in your side or backyard. If you need help finding it, call the water department and ask them. Or if possible, call the previous owner or builder and ask them.
3. CALL BEFORE YOU DIG. Don't dig anything until you call all the local utility companies. They'll come out, FREE and mark the location of their utilities.
4. Installing a backflow prevention device. A backflow prevention device is a system that goes from the main water source to the valve box. The reason to install a backflow prevention system is to prevent backflow of contaminated water from getting into the main water supply. In some areas, it is a requirement. Be sure to check with your local building codes office to determine if it's necessary in your area. Honestly, even if it's not a requirement, you should install one anyway.

5. Installing the valve box. You can install the valve box next to the water main or, as previously suggested, as close to your power supply as possible. Each valve is a station in your irrigation system. In your design, you've planned your xeriscape landscape. You have an idea of how many bubblers you are going to need based on your plant selection.

How many valves are you going to need? It depends on your water pressure. The lower the pressure, the fewer drip lines or emitters you can use on each station.

Here's an example. Let's say you have 10 plants in the same location. You can have one valve run those 10 drip lines. We'll plan Station or Zone 1 to run 10 drip lines - one for each plant.

Next, you have a row of 8 low maintenance hedges along the side of the house. One valve will run 8 drip lines. We'll plan Station or Zone 2 to run 8 drip lines.

You have another section in your landscape design that has low maintenance ground cover on both sides of a path. You want to install 5 drip lines on each side of the path, for a total of 10 drip lines. Station or Zone 3 will run 10 drip lines.

I always install an extra a valve. If your design requires three valves, consider adding an extra one. I don't hook up the extra valve, but if I want to expand my landscape in the future, the valve is already there. It's easier to install an extra valve now rather than later. Should you decide to add another valve in the future, you'll have to dig out the valve box to install it. It's not fun.

6. Install the flex pipe as close as possible to the areas you will be watering. Get upside down paint or marking paint and mark (using straight lines) a line from each valve to where your plants will be. You're marking lines where the flex pipes will be installed. Stay in a straight line-type grid. Using 90 degree turns.

7. After you mark where you want your lines to go, start digging. You did call the utility companies and have all the areas marked, right? You can use a trencher rented from a local equipment rental store, or a trenching shovel and a pick. Dig down about a foot deep. You can cover the pipe with the soil you removed when digging your trenches.

Before installing the drip lines and emitters, test your system first by turning the valves on and running water through the pipes. Let the ground dry and inspect the pipes for any possible leaks. After you determine there are no leaks, blow it out one more time by turning the valve on and run water through each station or zone. This will make sure you don't have any debris in the pipes.

8. Attach the drip line to main flex pipe, and then the emitter on the end of the drip line. Use the stakes in the kit to position the drip lines as close to your plant as possible.

I always plant my materials (except grass) before I install the irrigation system. Although I follow my design as close to the dimensions as possible, mistakes happen. If I have my plants in the ground first, I know exactly where the drip lines need to be installed.

I strongly suggest you take your plan to a nursery and get their opinion before you start your installation. Even if it's not free, a \$50 fee (or less) from a nursery or landscape expert can save you hundreds, possibly thousands of dollars in potential mistakes.

TIPS

BALANCE - Plant in groups of three. For larger areas, plant in odd numbers. Use the rule of three when placing containers on your patios, decks, and balconies.

Add height to a flower bed using containers, a bird bath, a reclaimed wooden ladder, a wheelbarrow, an old wooden bench, etc. Use your imagination and add height with items purchased at a yard sale, a thrift store or consignment shop.

Use hanging baskets on porches to draw the eye up to take in the color to create a nice balance.

CONTAINERS - Containers don't have to be fancy. You can buy silver, metal paint cans in three different sizes and place them in an area that needs a little love. Don't throw out containers that don't match your color scheme. Paint them. Containers come in many shapes and sizes. Concrete containers can withstand extreme weather conditions and will last a long time. Change the way you think when you walk through a yard sale, a thrift store or a consignment shop. Think: "trash to treasure." You can turn someone else's unwanted items into a great container to hold your beautiful plants.

LESS IS MORE - Xeriscape landscapes don't need every inch of space filled with something. In fact, an attractive xeriscape landscape has areas with nothing more than ground cover. Don't over do it. You can always add more elements to your landscape later but if you crowd it now and have to remove plants and other elements, it's a waste of time and money.

PATHS - To create a border for a new path, drive around and find homes that are being remodeled or newly constructed. Offer to take the extra stone or brick off their hands. Use the stone or bricks to create a border for your path.

See a neighbor using a jackhammer to remove an old concrete patio? Score! Ask the neighbor if you can haul the concrete off. Use the concrete to construct a stone path or as a border for a flower bed. It will take some labor on your part, but the materials are free. To set the concrete, dig holes to set the pieces of concrete into the landscape.

PLANTS - Pair plants with like colors. If you would like to use yellow flowers (Black Eyed Susans), accentuate the yellow by planting a succulent with a yellow variegated leaf. This creates a good balance and texture. When you go to the nursery, take your cart around and before you make a decision, find an area in the nursery and set the plants up like you would in your design. Want a second opinion? Ask the nursery employee for tips and suggestions. Yes, this will take time. Spend the time in the pre-planning stages and you'll be money-wise and landscape smart.

PROBLEM AREAS - Got a drainage ditch in your yard? If you use grass, it's not easy to mow in a ditch. Flowers or other plant material will wash away. Put landscape fabric down and add rip rock/large rock (the rocks won't be washed away). You could pour concrete, but that will create a faster flow of water. Unless you have drainage ditches or trenches to redirect the water.

Slope - Prevent soil erosion by installing a retaining wall. You can find DIY instructions on how to

build a retaining wall in *DIY Projects: How to Design Your Own Landscaping*. Use a good landscape fabric that not only prevents weeds but helps keep soil in place. Plant ground cover that is hardy and will spread across the sloped landscape. To add height, plant taller succulents or other native plants.

Flooding - If you have an area that is prone to flooding, turn it into a dry creek bed. Using the rip rock or large rocks that won't wash away. There are many colors of rip rock, so go bold, add color, texture and a design that won't wash away.

Large areas - consider breaking up a large area with a winding dry river bed. Install landscape fabric. Use gravel, stone, decomposed granite or rock on the outside of where the dry river will be. To form the "river," use a different color of rock. Red river rock meandering through a bed of gray gravel is a common method used to create a dry river bed.

ROCK GARDENS - Create a rock garden in a small area with three rocks in varied sizes. Plant

SOFTEN HARDSCAPES - Soften block walls with plants. I created a diamond pattern for yellow Lady Banks Roses on a 12 foot cinder block wall in our back yard. I measured and marked out my diamond pattern on the block wall - three diamonds in height, five rows across. Then I drilled small holes in the blocks in the four corners of each of the diamond shapes with a thin drill bit and inserted small metal eyelets. I ran a wire through the eyelets. Then I planted five Lady Banks Roses at the base or bottom of the first diamond and trained them to trail the wire. Instead of a bleak cinder block wall, I created a gorgeous focal point.

SOFTEN HARDSCAPES. Plant flowers or ground cover on either side of a path, next to driveways, patios - any hardscape.

UGLY WALLS - Got a garage or unsightly wall? Change it by painting it (a gallon of exterior paint costs less than \$15) and adding wall art. Make your own wall art by using an old window frame, a door, or outdoor painting. If your window frame looks rustic and you like that look, hang it up without painting it. If it needs a makeover and you want to get a distressed look, paint it dark brown. After the coat of dark brown dries, paint it with a white-wash (white paint watered down), using a paint brush.

Make a frame or buy one at a second hand store. See an ugly, large picture in a wooden frame at a garage sale? Get it cheap, take the glass and photo off and use the frame. Buy vinyl tablecloths (something that will compliment your color scheme) and wrap it around the frame. Use a staple gun to secure the vinyl tablecloth to the frame. Hang it up with nails or if you don't want holes, use 3M Command Strips.

To make your own outdoor painting, either buy or find an old piece of wood. Paint it using exterior paint. Got kids? Buy a few pint size cans of paint. Pour some paint onto paper plates, get your kids hand prints on the art, apply a few coats of polyurethane to protect it and hang it up. Your kids will love this. To add a "garden" flare, paint a stem with some leaves on it and at the top where a bloom would be, use a handprint (think tulip).

Install lattice and plant a drought tolerant vine. Buy two ladders, place them on both ends of the wall

and plant vines in the ground at the base of the ladders.

Use flower boxes. You can buy new flower boxes at a home supply store or make your own.

XERISCAPE IT! - Remove grass and use decomposed granite (DG), granite, gravel, river rock, plant a few succulents that never need watering and you'll have a maintenance free xeriscape. Use landscape fabric under the DG or ground cover to prevent weeds.

CONCLUSION

I hope you enjoyed this book. Your new xeriscape landscape is going to look awesome and will give you many years of enjoyment. You've made a good decision to save water and money. With many parts of the country experiencing severe drought and water restrictions, you can do your part by saving water with a xeriscape landscape.

Not only will you see a savings in your monthly water bill, some water companies offer rebates to homeowners who remove grass and plant water-wise, xeriscape landscaping. Ask your local water company if they offer incentives or rebates to remove turf grass and plant native plant beds and hardscapes.

Allow your personality to show with your new landscape design. Have fun with it. Don't be afraid to experiment. You can always make changes. Draw your design, get a plan, set a budget, fill the earth in your hands, use your imagination and be proud of saving water by creating an extraordinary xeriscape landscape.

Feel free to stop by www.DIYGirlFriends.com for the latest tips and information on landscaping and all things DIY.

May your days be filled with happiness, peace, and a never-ending list of fun and rewarding DIY projects.