



GreenTip
How Do You Measure Up?



Xeriscape: Landscape Water Conservation

In Guilford County, as in many areas of North Carolina and the southeastern United States, water has become a very serious issue. Long periods of drought have reduced our high quality water supplies to a critical level several times in the recent past, so **conservation** is a concept we should all strive to incorporate into our everyday lives. One way to do that is to **xeriscape** your yard.

What is Xeriscape?

The term originates from the Greek word xeros, meaning dry. Xeriscape has become the label for a modern approach to landscaping that has gained popularity due to water shortages. It is estimated that as much as 25% of our water supply is used for landscape and garden watering. Xeriscaping incorporates the use of native, drought-resistant plants in a well thought out landscape plan that can reduce yard and garden water usage by as much as 54%. Don't assume that following the principals of xeriscape will leave you with a yard full of cacti and gravel! Check out these tips for creating an attractive, reduced maintenance, water conserving outdoor environment at your home.

Develop a Plan:

First, it's important to draw up a plan for your property that incorporates landscape elements to meet your individual needs. If you're starting from scratch, pay close attention to areas where you'd like to create shade and areas that will need to support special plantings such as vegetable gardens or high visibility flower beds. In general, use groundcovers to replace large, unused expanses of grass and consider pervious paving in lieu of grass in high traffic areas. Group plants according to their light and water needs, and arrange them by height to help easily accommodate those needs. A well-designed xeriscape can decrease maintenance by as much as 50% through reduced mowing, annual mulching and efficient watering techniques.

Choosing the Right Plants:

Much of the water used in maintaining residential landscapes goes to supporting plants that are not indigenous to our region and are therefore not suited to our particular climate. Choose plants that are native varieties, especially those that are drought tolerant. There are many native species of trees, shrubs and flowering plants available that will be just as aesthetically pleasing as the exotic imports we've become used to seeing. Native plants tend to be healthier, improve soil conditions and require less chemicals, maintenance and water to thrive. For some suggestions, check with the Guilford County Cooperative Extension (375-5876) or your local nursery.

For More Information:

Check out these resources for more information on **xeriscape** design and planting:

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/gaston/Horticulture/H2Ocons.html>

<http://www.p2pays.org/ref/43/42997.pdf>