

SAN MARCOS, a WaterWise community

Promoting the efficient use of California's water and installing drought-tolerant, water-conserving landscaping

By Guenter Schott

This article is intended to draw more attention to the life-blood of landscaping: **WATER.**

And in light of the plea by the Vallecitos Water District for increased conservation efforts, I was inspired to do some research and compile the following article.

Why should I conserve water?

Your help is needed in saving more water now because California is in a drought and our supplies are being cut. Recent court-ordered restrictions on water deliveries from Northern California are limiting water supplies and rapidly depleting water storage levels across much of the state. To make matters worse, the court-ordered restrictions are making our state system for managing water more vulnerable to weather changes. This will make it more difficult to cope with and recover from dry conditions in the years ahead. California's limited supply of water, subject to ever-increasing demands, is just one resource saved by xeriscaping.

Advantages

- Lower water bills
- More water available for other uses and other people (such as showers, sinks, hoses etc.)
- Today's waste-efficient landscapes use "unthirsty" plants — California natives and drought tolerant exotics.
- Little or no lawn mowing (saves energy)
- Xeriscape plants along with proper bed design tend to take full advantage of rainfall
- When water restrictions are implemented, xeriscape plants will tend to survive, while more traditional plants or grass may not.
- Increased habitat for native bees, butterflies, and other fauna.

By designing a landscape in an appropriate manner, selecting compatible plants, and installing efficient irrigation systems, a balance can be achieved that fits both the aesthetic needs of the homeowner, and the resource availability of our region.

Attractive gardens and landscape add to the value of your home and bring years of beauty and enjoyment to the community. With a water efficient design you'll be able to curb plant disease, minimize the use of chemical fertilizers, and save water, money, and labor time.



Whether you are putting in a new landscape or slowly changing the current landscaping at your home, select plants that are appropriate for your local climate conditions. Having a yard with 100% lawn turf area in a dry desert climate uses significant amounts of water. Also consider the trend towards *Xeriscape* and a more natural landscape or wildscape.

For most of North America, over 50% of residential water used is applied to landscape and lawns. Xeriscape can reduce landscape water use by 50 - 75%.

Less Maintenance. Aside from occasional pruning and weeding, maintenance is minimal. Watering requirements are low, and can be met with

simple irrigation systems.

No Fertilizers or Pesticides. Using plants native to our area will eliminate the need for chemical supplements. Sufficient nutrients are provided by healthy organic soil.

Improves Property Value. A good Xeriscape can raise property values which more than offset the cost of installation. Protect your landscaping investment by drought-proofing it.



Xeriscape promotes creative approaches to water conserving landscapes by helping people improve their landscapes and to reduce the need for water, maintenance and other resources. Originally developed for drought-afflicted areas, the principles of xeriscape today have an ever broadening appeal. With water now considered an expensive and limited resource, all landscaping projects, residential or commercial, can benefit from this alternative. (The word xeriscaping was coined by combining xeros — Greek for "dry" — with landscape.)

To demonstrate and promote this outdoor water conservation message and display what can be accomplished in water efficient landscapes, you might want to visit the **Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College**
12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West
El Cajon, CA 92019
Tel.: (619) 660-0614, ext. 10
E-mail: info@TheGarden.org

Landscaping is the most service-oriented business in our community and beautiful manicured front lawns are inviting ... but how water-efficient are they? Trees will produce some shade that help

eliminate evaporation, but sodden lawns clearly are huge water guzzlers. Additionally, trees provide many other benefits — reduction of summer cooling costs, reduction of outside air temperatures under the tree by several degrees and tempering the heat island effect in cities.

North Americans are addicted to their lawns. We collectively spend vast amounts of time, energy and money trying to force non-native grass species to grow where nature did not intend. We adhere to the despicable concept of putting our drinking water on the lawn, along with chemical fertilizers so that it grows faster, and then mowing it down a week later with one of the least efficient gas powered devices available to humankind.

The air pollution from cutting grass for an hour with a gasoline powered lawn mower is about the same as that from a 100 mile automobile ride, according to a study from Sweden. The report, which the authors say is the first to compare lawn mower pollution with auto mileage, recommends using catalytic converters on mowers. One old gas powered lawn mower running for an hour emits as much pollution as driving 650 miles in a 1992 model automobile.



The positive effects of our lawns and gardens can quickly be negated if we are not careful about the tools we use to maintain them. I, for one, am using an electric lawnmower.

Set aside a section of your yard for native and California Friendly plants. With more than 6,000 to choose from, you won't have to sacrifice beauty to save water.

Some homeowners' associations may object to non-traditional plants. If that is the case, changes can and should be made.