**Water-wise gardening**

**Xeriscaping can wean your landscape off the wet stuff**

**STEP 1** Planning a design

**STEP 2** Soil analysis

**STEP 3** Appropriate plant selection

**STEP 4** Turf planting

**STEP 5** Efficient irrigation

**STEP 6** Mulching

**STEP 7** Maintenance

**Xeriscape** is a Greek word that means dry. Xeriscape gardening is the planning and development of a landscape that uses little additional water to maintain its environment. It can be applied to any landscape design, from formal to informal. Although it may take two to three years to establish a xeric landscape aimed to reduce the amount of water used.

Seven water-saving principles of xeriscaping are outlined below.

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**The seven principles of xeriscape gardening**

**STEP 1** Planning a design

Grow a garden in a planter or a site of paper and sketch your current soil, including your drains and existing vegetation, from the soil to the sun. Consider:
- How you plan to live in the house.
- How your proposed plants will operate.
- Whether you want a low- or high-maintenance landscape.
- What type of plants you want and any additional landscape materials such as stones, pebbles and wildlife-friendly plants, lawns and water sites. Use labels and maps to be incorporated into the plan. A good plan divides the yard into water usage zones: high (without irrigation), moderate (occasional watering) and low (annual rainfall). It incorporates shrubs and appropriate plant adaptations. For example, use an existing tree to provide shade and ensure adequate soil around it.

**STEP 2** Soil analysis

Soil will hold more moisture if properly prepared. High organic-water zones, added organic manure, compost or leaves can help soil retain moisture. In the low-water zone, till the soil will help it up to 6 feet wide and 1 foot deep. Consider:
- Color and texture: Do you want a heavy, coarse-textured or fine-textured soil?
- Level of organic matter:
  - High: 60% or more
  - Medium: 26-59%
  - Low: 25% or less
- Soil texture:
  - Clay: Fine and slow to absorb water
  - Loam: Medium and slow to absorb water
  - Sand: Fast and slow to absorb water

**STEP 3** Appropriate plant selection

Consider the design of the new planting site when choosing plants. Groups with similar water, light and watering requirements. Some guidelines for landscape and turf planting:

- **Keys:**
  - Shrub: Any woody plant with a single trunk and more than 1 foot wide.
  - Tree: Plant with a single trunk and more than 1 foot wide.
  - Turf: All grasses.

**STEP 4** Turf planting

**STEP 5** Efficient irrigation

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**STEP 7** Maintenance

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**Note:**

**A CLASS ON XERISCAPING WILL BE HELD 7 P.M. MARCH 14 AT THE AGRICULTURAL CENTER. THE PROGRAM IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. CALL 375-5876 FOR INFORMATION.**

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**WATER-SAVE PLANTS**

**Moderate water zone**

**Low water zone**

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**Source:** City of Greensboro; N.C. Cooperative Extension Service; University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences; “Xeriscape Gardening” by Connie Ellefson, Tom Stephens and Doug Welsh.