

Ripple Effect #8

Water-Efficient Landscaping

Get to the root of water conservation; try it in your own yard. Moorhead Public Service (<http://www.mpsutility.com/>) has provided the following information to help you find out more about landscaping that helps conserve water and energy!

The water-efficient landscape, called Xeriscape (zeer' iss cape)TM, relies mainly on nature's rainfall. Xeriscape conserves water through creative landscaping techniques, but it doesn't have to be created using only cacti and rocks. In our climate, Xeriscapes are usually created by grouping plants according to how much water they use and by planting species that are water-efficient and native to our region. Some of the benefits of a Xeriscape include:

- An attractive and functional yard
- Less time and money spent on maintenance
- Less water, fertilizer, fuel, and chemical use
- Saving on your summer water bill
- Reduced impact of drought

The Seven Principles of Xeriscape:

1. Plan & design.

Start with a scaled drawing of your site that shows plants and structures. Add information about soil, drainage, sun, and shade. Consider future needs for play and entertainment areas. Develop a master plan and planting design.

2. Limit lawn areas.

Restrict lawn areas to high-use, practical areas and select drought-tolerant grasses such as blue grama and Buffalo grass. Consider using shrubs, ground covers, and wildflowers instead of turf.

3. Use an efficient watering system.

Even un-thirsty landscapes need a drink sometimes. Choose water-efficient irrigation such as low-volume, low-angle heads and drip systems.

4. Improve the soil.

Plants won't grow without a good home, so collect a sample and have it tested to find out the nutrient content, pH level, and other information. If the tests show that the soil texture, nutrient level, or moisture-holding capacity needs improvement, seek advice from either your local nursery or Extension Service.

5. Use water-efficient plants.

When planting, keep in mind what size the plants will be when they

mature and how they'll fit in with the rest of your landscape. To learn more about which species are water-efficient, for a plant list, go to Xeriscape™ [plant list](http://www.mpsutility.com/pdf/XeriscapePlantListing.pdf) (<http://www.mpsutility.com/pdf/XeriscapePlantListing.pdf>). Your local Extension Service, Conservation District or nursery may also have suggestions about which plants you might want to use.

6. Add mulches.

Use mulches (wood chips, leaves, grass clippings) to reduce water loss, minimize erosion, moderate soil temperature, slow weed growth, and improve the soil.

7. Follow a maintenance program.

Like any living thing, a Xeriscape™ needs a little attention. Check trees and shrubs yearly for pruning; eliminate pests, weeds, and diseases. Some plants may need fertilizer. Cut any grassy areas, trimming off no more than one-third of the blade, and leave the clippings on the lawn.