

Seven Principles of Xeriscaping

1 - Plan and Design

1. A landscape plan is the first and most important step in achieving a successful Xeriscape type landscape.
2. Analyze your site. Sketch a layout of your yard including structures, driveways, walks, patios, trees, shrubs, grass areas and drainage and utility lines.
3. Consider your lifestyle and budget.
4. Utilize local landscape professionals, nurseries and publications.
5. Implement gradually over several years.

2 - Prepare Your Soil

1. Many areas of Corpus Christi have clay soil, but some areas have sandy soil.
2. If your soil is hard when dry and sticky when wet, it has a high clay content. It also probably has an alkalinity higher than most plants like. It can be amended to improve texture and water retention.
3. If your soil passes water freely and is not sticky when wet, it has a high sand content. It can be amended to improve texture and water retention.

A general recipe for amending the soil is shown below for a 100 square foot area. Cover the area and then thoroughly mix or till in the amendments to a depth of at least ten inches.

- 4 inches of organic matter such as peat moss or compost.
- 4 pounds of Ironite or equivalent product
- 25 pounds of composted manure
- If soil has high clay content add 2 inches of coarse sand.
- If soil has high sand content add 2 inches of high clay content soil.

3 - Select Appropriate Plants

1. Plant selections should be based on adaptability to landscape area, desired effect, color, texture and mature size.
2. Select trees, shrubs and ground covers based on their adaptability to your area's soil and weather conditions.
3. Select trees, shrubs and ground covers which require little or no supplemental irrigation after becoming established.
4. Give plants and shrubs plenty of room to grow to above intruding underground wastewater lines and rubbing against power lines.

4 - Reduce Grass Areas

Reduce grass areas whenever possible and replace with appropriate plant material or hardscape.

1. Select grass according to its intended use, planting location and maintenance requirements.
2. Reduce the size of water-sensitive lawns by including enlarged beds and hardscapes (decks, patios and walkways)
3. Consider the ease or difficulty in watering the proposed grass. Eliminate areas that are long and narrow or small and odd-shaped which are difficult to water efficiently.
4. Where practical, plant more drought tolerant grasses.

5- Water Efficiently

Watering efficiently means giving your plants, tree and shrubs adequate water without any waste.

The key to watering lawns is applying water infrequently and thoroughly. This will result in a deep rooted drought resistant lawn. Water needs vary depending on type of lawn grass.

1. Established trees, shrubs and ground covers also should be watered infrequently, but thoroughly. Trees should be watered at the dripline, which is directly below the outermost reaches of the branches.
2. Newly planted trees, shrubs and plants need to be watered frequently until their root systems develop. Look for wilting, leaf curling, leaf discoloration or other signs of dehydration.
3. Convert to drip or soaker hose irrigation methods whenever possible. Select sprinkler heads with low angle and large droplet distribution. Avoid using irrigation systems that place water high in the air or outside the intended area, such as the sidewalk to street.
4. Water before 10:00 a.m. or after 6:00 p.m., morning watering is better. Comply with local watering laws.

6 - Use Mulch

Use two inches or more of organic or inorganic mulch around shrubs, trees and planting beds.

1. Mulch is a layer of material that covers the soil surface.
2. Mulch conserves water by reducing evaporation from the soil.
3. Mulch reduces weeds, prevents soil compaction and keeps soil temperatures more moderate.
4. Organic mulch improves the soil structure as they decompose over time.
5. Mulch provides a finished appearance to the garden.

7 - Perform Appropriate Maintenance

A properly implemented Xeriscape landscape helps reduce maintenance.

1. Proper landscape maintenance preserves and enhances a Xeriscape.
2. Proper mowing of grasses helps conserve water and energy. Never remove more than one-third of the leaf blade and leave clippings on the lawn.
3. Correct fertilization of all plant materials is essential. The art of fertilizing is type, timing and quantity.
4. Periodically inspect all irrigation equipment. Adjust sprinkler systems for optimum conservation.
5. Eliminate small weeds through manual pulling before they grow a deep root system or germinate seeds.
6. Prune plant materials to maintain health and appearance (form and size).
7. Avoid topping of trees which opens them to the possibility of disease and a shorter life span.
8. Perform insect and disease control with an environmentally friendly product.