XERISCAPING
WATER-WISE LANDSCAPING

What is Xeriscaping?

Also known as "water-wise landscaping", a xeriscaped yard strives to use less water than a traditional yard. A xeriscaped yard varies greatly, from drought-tolerant, desert-loving plants, to lush varieties. Xeriscape design varies greatly, and can be categorized into three main groups:

1. **Formal:** balanced and symmetrical design; comprised of straight paths, trimmed hedges, straight pathways and fence lines. Frequent maintenance is required.
2. **Informal:** less defined edges and asymmetrical designs, curving linear beds, curved pathways
3. **Natural:** plants grouped in a more natural manner (not in lines or rows), incorporates native plants, composting, and other features. Less maintenance is required.

Step 1: Plan and Design

- ☐ Make a skeleton map of the area to be landscaped.
- ☐ Consider how you use each area.
- ☐ Begin placing plants on your skeleton map, group plants according to their light needs, water requirements, and size.
- ☐ Remember to give each plant room to grow.
- ☐ Designs can be formal, informal, or natural.

Step 2: Create Practical Turf

Xeriscaping is about creating practical turf and being water-wise, not necessarily removing all lawn in one's yard.

For example…

- ☐ Replace lawn with shade-tolerant native plants in the shady areas of your yard
- ☐ Replace lawn with native plants helpful for erosion control along a hillside.
- ☐ Consider artificial turf alternatives if you desire a lawn aesthetic.

Step 3: Group Similar Plants

It is important to group plants together according to their micro-climate (sun exposure, water requirements, soil type).

For example…

- ☐ Put plants that have higher water needs next to down-spouts, in low-lying areas, or areas that don't drain as quickly (such as clay soils).
- ☐ Put plants that prefer sunlight and dry conditions on elevated areas or those with south or west exposures.

Step 4: Improve the Soil

Depending on soil type, amendments may be needed.

- ☐ Clay soils can be amended with compost and peat moss
- ☐ Sandy soils can be amended with humus, peat moss, manure

☐ Silt soils can be amended with compost, aged manure/straw

Step 5: Mulch

Mulch is essential for keeping soil and roots cool. Cool soil and roots reduces plant water loss through evapotranspiration. Mulch also helps prevent weeds and soil erosion.

Step 6: Efficient Irrigation

To minimize your water use:

☐ Water in the morning or evening when the wind is still and evaporation rates are lowest.

☐ Use drip, micro-sprays, bubblers, or emitters to deliver water. When sprinklers are necessary, use sprinklers that keep the water close to the ground, and use rotary (side-to-side) or stationary sprinkler heads.

☐ Inspect the irrigation system regularly for leaks, broken emitters

☐ Change your irrigation schedule with the weather. Generally, you should do this at least once a month. Turn off your irrigation if a storm moves in, and don't turn it back on until plants need to be watered.

Local Resources

Medford Water Commission Website – sprinkler watering times based on seasonality.
- Watering Infoline
- Sprinkler Checkups
- Water-Wise Gardening In Medford

Web Soil Survey Website – determine soil type of your property