

# Converting to Xeriscape!

We live in one of the most unique areas of the world, the Sonoran Desert. Our water supply is limited, so using plants that conserve water is a natural choice. Before you remove your grass, do a little planning on how you are going to use the space when the grass is gone.

Think of landscape as an extension of your living space. It should be appropriate to the architecture of your home, your lifestyle, your region and climate, and your budget.

## Steps

1. Have A Plan
2. Remove the Turf
3. Grade the Yard
4. Rework the Irrigation
5. Plant and Mulch
6. Collect your Rebate
7. Enjoy Your Landscape

## Rules:

- #1 Keep it simple
- #2 Decide on a main theme or goal
- #3 Use 1 or 2 focal points
- #4 Have a short plant material list (see #1)

Plan ahead. Read, visit landscapes, observe plant material, start a design book, take photos, collect magazine articles & pictures. Take your time, consult with experts, use the highest quality materials and workmanship you can afford.

Techniques to consider as you develop your plan.

- ✓ Work **with** Mother Nature instead of against her
- ✓ Recreate a “natural look”
- ✓ Informal landscapes are usually easier and less costly to maintain
- ✓ Work with odd numbers of plants (3, 5, 7, etc.)
- ✓ Frame views
- ✓ Try tucking, massing and layering your plants
- ✓ Leave open space so eyes can “rest”
- ✓ Some plants are powerful - one may be all that’s needed (bold cacti, for example)
- ✓ Consider ‘cascades’, ‘spills’ and ‘drifting’ as you plan

**Color, form, and texture** are the landscape designer’s means of creating impact. **Color** is the most obvious. Contrasting and complementing colors, especially in mass plantings, make a strong visual statement. **Texture** has more subtle visual impact. In this accent grouping, the similarity and contrast in textures provide the interest and focus amid shades of green. **Form** provides continuity and refers to both the shape of individual plants and the spatial relationships created by their placement in the landscape.



Keep in Mind.....

Household energy use can be reduced up to 60% by careful selection and placement of plants.

Place evergreen shade trees on East and West sides of home

Deciduous trees on South side of home

Deciduous vines on West and North facing walls

Deciduous or evergreen vines on trellises and ramadas

### **Use effective irrigation practices**

Group plants with like water needs

Use an effective irrigation system

Use organic mulches

Try strategies to capture rainfall from roof and patios (berms, swales, retention areas)

Rainwater and Gray water can be directed to use on landscapes

Choose the Right Plant for the Right Place

Plan on the mature size of the plant. Don't cram a 6' x 6' shrub in a 3' space.

This will reduce the generation of green waste from constant pruning.

Try grasscycling (returning clippings to your yard) or composting to recycle organic waste.

Reduce the Need for Fertilizers and Pesticides

The average homeowner uses 10 times more pesticides than are used in a similar amount of farmland.

Well adapted plants have less diseases and are resistant to attack by insects.

Create a Habitat for Wildlife and enjoy hummingbirds and butterflies that you attract.



Plan for Edible Landscaping

## **Getting Started**

### **Landscape Design Process**

1. Site Analysis
2. Needs and wants list
3. Bubble diagram
4. Design outdoor rooms on paper
5. Select the plants you want to use
6. Install the irrigation system
7. Install the plants

## Design Planning Example

*How would you create a landscape based on the facts given below?*

You are a young couple with small children. You don't know how long you'll stay in the house. The house is in an older neighborhood and has no pool, a lot of lawn and some big pine and eucalyptus trees. You don't like all the mowing, re-seeding, etc., needed to keep the lawns looking good - and the water bills are too high. The back yard is primarily seen from the kitchen. You don't have a dog. The north-facing shady back yard has a wood fence and alley at the back and wire fencing along the sides. You like your neighbors but you'd like more privacy. You need play space for the children and a comfortable informal outdoor space to spend time in. You would like to build a pool someday if you remain in this home. You have the time and energy to do a lot of the work yourself.

Sorting out this information using the design elements:

### 1. House and Property:

- Older property with lawn and big trees
- May only stay a few years
- Back yard is isolated from living/family room
- You can drive into the back yard from the alley

### 2. Sun and Weather:

- Existing large trees provide shade

### 3. Surroundings:

- No problem with noise
- Back yard lacks privacy

### 4. Lifestyle

- Small children - possibly needing play equipment, pool, play space
- Lawn upkeep too burdensome
- Can do much of the work yourself

***Here is one design solution derived from the above information:***

Over time convert the unusable lawn areas (including front yard lawn) to mulched planting beds on a drip system. Keep some lawn in the back yard for play.

Add an informal patio of stabilized decomposed granite or pavers.

Add wood trellises along the sides of the back yard to lightly screen views of the neighbors.

Put in some simple play equipment in a shady part of the yard - on a deep sand bed for safety.

Reserve part of the yard for a future fenced pool.

Look through home landscaping books to get ideas for do-it-yourself construction.

***Translated into a design plan:***

Desired Structures: Patio (stabilized, decomposed granite or unit pavers), wood vine trellises, play equipment, pool.

Desired Landscape: Staged conversion of unused lawn areas to mulched shrub/groundcover beds. Staged conversion to drip irrigation and sprinkler system for back yard lawn.