

Plan a Stunning Desert Landscape

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. Desert-adapted plants are happy in our heavy, alkaline soils and challenging climate making it easier to keep them healthy.

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.

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

One third to one half of household water consumption is used in the landscape. You can reduce this by 50% with careful planning and maintenance.

- Limit turf and pool size
- 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)
- 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.

Choosing Plants

There are hundreds of desert adapted plants to choose from that can help you create a stunning, low water use landscape. You can also create moods or themes in your yard using desert adapted plants. These include native desert, Southwestern, Tropical, Mediterranean, rustic, natural or wild, bird & butterfly, etc. Visit Water Wise Landscaping in Chandler to browse through over 600 plants <http://www.chandler.watersavingplants.com/>

The Garden Gallery section has more than 30 categories highlight front yards, back yards, patio areas, walkways, shady spaces, entryways, benches and seating areas, and much more.

The Garden Tour features 24 distinctive landscapes, each with dozens of photos in each section to help you solve your landscaping needs by showing local landscape combinations and solutions. As you move your cursor over various plants in the image, a rectangle or square-shaped button will lead you to more information on that plant.

Some cities have resources available, including free brochures, classes and one-on-one guidance to help you plan your landscape. Here's one from the City of Scottsdale that includes architectural drawings of seven landscapes. Use this [Landscape Revitalization Workbook](#) to gather ideas for your own yard.

Check the [AMWUA](#) website for a listing of your local city water conservation offices.

City of Chandler
Water Conservation Office
conserve@chandleraz.gov
480-782-3580

