

Real Estate

GREEN HOUSE Water wise Maj Gen C.S. Bewli

Water and power shortage have become major issues in urban areas. Residents have to bear with cuts in water and power supply on a regular basis. Maintaining a garden becomes a tall order in such a scenario. Having a xeriscape is a wonderful option which drastically cuts the requirement of water without sacrificing much on the aesthetics of the garden. Xeriscaping is a technique of crafting a piece of land using plants that are slow-growing and drought resistant. It is an alternative to other types of traditional landscapes and gardens but, in no way inferior to them.



Such gardening becomes all the more relevant in today's context as in most of the townships potable water is used for gardening. This results not only in the shortage of drinking water but also tends to kill water guzzling plants for want of water.

Such effortless gardens are ideal for people who have hardly any time to spare but have a keen desire to have a garden.

To give a different dimension and colour to the xeriscape, a few water-loving plants should also be planted at suitable places. Care should be taken to ensure that these plants are grouped separately from drought-resistant plants for ease in watering.

How you can save water

There are certain plants that require less water for growth. Normally plants that are able to survive a dry spell of about one to two months may be classified as drought-resistant plants.

To aid xeriscaping, there is an option to meet even reduced water requirement by:

- Installing drip irrigation system to directly deliver water to the base of the plants.
- Having slow-growing species that need less water due to their slow growth.

- Growing plants having long tap roots which go deep in the soil to meet their water requirement.
- Growing cacti and other succulent plants that have the natural ability to store water to be utilised in time of need.
- Growing plants that have waxy coating on the leaves to reduce transpiration.

What you can plant

The most important aspect of xeriscaping is to identify plants that need less water and can accept neglect while looking good. Some of the plants that meet these criteria and can be planted in pots or in ground are:

- Palms: Phoenix dactylifera, Washingtonia filifera
- Beautiful flowering shrubs: Lagerstroemia indica, Euonymus japonica, Myrtus communis.
- Small flowering shrubs and plants: Buxus microphylla japonica, Nandina domestica, Murraya koenigii, Indian hawthorn, Lantana, Gaillardia.
- Succulents: Adenium obesum, Portulacaria afra, Agave americana, Yucca aloifolia, Aloe barbadensis, Echeveria imbricata, kalanchoe thrysifolia, Sedum cyaneum and some Sempervivum and Dudleya species.
- Cacti: Mammillaria beneckeii, Cereus peruvianus, Ferrocactus herrerae, Echinocactus grusonii etc.

Other plants falling in this category may also be tried to add variety and colour to the garden.

— The writer is the President of National Cactus and Succulent Society of India.

Tips for a healthy garden

- Drought resistant and water-loving plants should be grouped separately for ease in watering.
- Initial care of drought-resistant plants should be taken, once established their survival is easy.
- Pinching and pruning of shrubs should be carried out during growing season to ensure proper shape and size of the plants.



ADVANTAGES

- It saves water.
- It saves time due to reduced watering.
- It makes gardening simpler and interesting as it takes less effort to maintain such landscapes.
- For the overall good health of the plants, these plants may be watered once in a week but water-loving plants should be watered as usual.



