



This blog post was created as part of a series for a South Texas garden site. It was intended to be educational in nature, included original photography, and placement on their WordPress-based site.

SMART YARDS SAVE MORE THAN MONEY

It's no secret that most of Texas has been under drought conditions for the past four years. With heavy fracking in the Eagle Ford shale, increased population growth, and the Climate Prediction Center anticipating continued higher-than-normal temperatures in the state, water conservation should be on everyone's mind.

But you might be wondering what you can do. Can one household really make a difference?

According to Eartheasy (http://eartheasy.com/grow_xeriscape.htm), more than 50 percent of residential water is used to keep household landscaping alive. Xeriscape Corpus Christi (<http://www.xeriscapecc.com>) indicates water use for landscaping increases 50-60 percent during the summer months when water is most scarce. So, the answer is yes, one household really can make a difference.

How much money could you save on your water bill if you only needed to use half or less of the water you use now without drastically changing your lifestyle?

All you'd need to do is xeriscape your property. Xeriscaping refers to the use of creative landscaping using native plants and non-water-consuming materials to conserve water, but there are some extra benefits you might not be aware of.

Not only can you save a significant amount of money on your water bill (and conserve clean water for other uses like drinking), but xeriscaped yards require less care than traditional lawns and you don't need as many, or even any, pesticides or fertilizers. Far from the desert landscape or barren rock yard many people envision when they hear the term, xeriscaping relies on using native plants and trees, allowing for a great deal of color and variety. You may even be lucky enough to attract some of the local wildlife into your space, enhancing your view.

If xeriscaping sounds like a good idea to you, there are seven basic principles to follow to convert your yard to a fully xeriscaped space. Not surprisingly, the process starts with a plan and design, understanding your space including any paved areas, structures, drainage, and utility lines. With this plan, it is not necessary to rip out your entire lawn and start from bare soil. You can make changes gradually, working the plan in over the course of several seasons.

According to Xeriscape Corpus Christi, many yards in the city are characterized by either clay soil or sandy soil and may need to be amended to improve texture and water retention. There is a relatively simple recipe that can be followed to improve soil conditions in your space available through the Xeriscape Corpus Christi website.

While many people tend to think xeriscaping forces you into a lifeless, colorless view, there are a number of plants that can be selected to beautify your space and create intimate garden spaces. You can talk with your local nursery about which plants to use or Xeriscape Corpus Christi also offers a handy brochure with a list of drought-friendly plants, trees, shrubs, and ground cover. While principle three focuses on choosing the right plants, principle four focuses on reducing grassy areas which require higher water use.

If you'd like to see some examples of plants you could use, you can take a stroll through the xeriscape garden at the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History or through the South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center off South Staples. Both provide excellent examples of lush, comfortable green spaces that require little care, maintenance, or most importantly, water.

The seven principles of xeriscaping are rounded out by using appropriate irrigation techniques, mulching to reduce evaporation, and maintenance of the landscape to maximize efficiency.

If you'd like to learn more about xeriscaping, be sure to contact the Xeriscape Learning Center and Design Garden at the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History or consider joining the volunteer group associated with it.