

# THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF XERISCAPE

## XERISCAPE: A WATER EFFICIENT LANDSCAPE USING PLANTS ADAPTED TO OUR AREA

- 1. Planning and Design:** Have a plan. Find out where things are. Consider the view, the slope, the exposure and soils of the area. Take into account the existing vegetation and topography of the site and the intended use. Group plants with like water needs together. Decide where things will be. Decide when things will be done. Most landscapes are best done in phases.
- 2. Soil Analysis:** Soils can vary within a given site; an analysis based on random sampling can provide information for plant selection and soil amendments. When appropriate, soil amendments such as sphagnum peat moss or compost can improve root development, water infiltration and retention. Improve the soil before planting and installing the irrigation system. A soil test is valuable if you have a problem area in the existing landscape.
- 3. Appropriate Plant Selection:** Most plants have a place in Xeriscape. Plant selection should be based on the intended use in the landscape. Use of plants with low water needs will allow the maximum water conservation.
- 4. Practical Turf Areas:** The type and location of turf areas should be considered a major design element of the landscape. The selection and location of turf should be decided on the same basis as other plantings. The reduction or elimination of turf areas and locating them separately so that they may be watered more efficiently can result in significant reductions in water use.
- 5. Efficient Irrigation:** The irrigation system should be well planned and managed. Irrigate turf areas separately. Group plants with like water needs together. Not all plants need the same amount of water. Irrigation needs change with the season and the weather. Irrigate according to the condition of the plants rather than on a fixed schedule. Plants may require supplemental irrigation until they become established (two or three years).
- 6. Use Mulches:** Mulches minimize evaporation, reduce weed growth, slow erosion and help prevent soil temperature fluctuations. The use of mulches when applied and maintained to proper depth is one of the keys to a successful Xeriscape. Organic mulches such as wood chips or bark are best. Do not use any solid plastic under the mulch or elsewhere in the landscape.
- 7. Appropriate Maintenance:** Proper pruning, weeding, fertilization and proper attention to the irrigation system will preserve and enhance the quality of the Xeriscape. A landscape adapted to the environment will require less maintenance, less fertilizer and reduce the use of pesticides and other chemicals. The principles of Xeriscape will assure an attractive, healthy landscape with the use of the 'just right' amount of water.