



MSU Tollgate Gardens

SOUTH XERISCAPE GARDEN

The Xeriscape Garden combines the Greek word Xeros (meaning dry) and an abbreviation of the English word landscape. This represents a garden landscape that thrives with little supplemental watering through the use of certain principals.

- Create a plan. Take advantage of water run-off from roofs and pavement. Xeriscape beds should be graded to allow water to soak into the soil rather than being allowed to run off.
- Plant low water use plants.
- Irrigate efficiently and properly maintain your irrigation system.
- Consider soil amendments, if appropriate.
- Mulch as it can reduce water demand by as much as 40 percent. It also keeps the soil cooler and eliminates weed competition and reduces evaporation from the soil surface.

Many people are of the opinion that you can only grow desert plants or cactus in a Xeriscape Garden. However, this garden was designed to demonstrate the wide diversity of plants that can thrive in this environment.



SHRUBS

Shrubs can be a valuable part of the Xeriscape Garden if they are given supplemental watering during their first two years to insure that they become well established. Shrubs which have been used successfully in this garden include:

Nine Bark



Few shrubs are easier to grow than Ninebark (*Physocarpus*), a North American native largely left alone by animal pests and which tolerates drought. Nine Bark has the additional benefit of peeling bark which creates winter interest.

Bluebeard

Bluebeard (*Caryopteris*) commonly called blue mist, is a low-mounded, deciduous shrub valued for its late summer flowers. They typically produce about 18-30" of growth per year, so



total shrub height depends in large part upon the extent of winter dieback and/or annual spring pruning.

Foliage is very aromatic when brushed with a hand. Butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects are attracted to the flowers.

Juniper

Shrubs in a Xeriscape garden do not have to be limited to deciduous varieties. If good drainage is provided, Junipers (*Juniperus*) that are both



evergreen and coniferous can withstand heat and drought. As Junipers range from low growing shrubs to tall, slender trees with foliage color varying from light to dark green, blue to silver, and

yellow to gold, possibilities for design are endless.

GRASSES

Grasses are highly adaptable as they grow better in poorer soils than many other plants and many are highly drought tolerant. They come in a variety of heights, colors and textures, offering movement and sound to the garden with the slightest breeze. A variety of grasses have been used here including:

Switch Grass



Switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*) is generally noted for its stiff, columnar form, and typically retains its shape throughout the growing season. It is a clump-forming, warm season grass which

typically grows 3' tall.

Fountain Grass

We also planted (*Pennisetum setaceum*) for its graceful, arching leaves, and erect or nodding



rose-colored flower spikes up to 12" long. Fountain grass grows in dense, clumps that can get 3-4' tall and 2-3' across with a fountain of feathery plumes flowing out of the foliage.

PERENNIALS

Yarrow



Achillea millefolium has fernlike leaves and colorful large flat-topped blooms that range from red, pink, salmon, yellow and white. Most grow to 2'-4' tall but low-growing varieties are available. They bloom midsummer into fall.

Russian Sage

The lavender blue flowers of *Salvia yangii* bloom in July and last until September and attract butterflies. Its silver-gray foliage is, deeply cut and highly aromatic.



Prickly Pear Cactus



(*Opuntia humifusa*) reaches 6"-14" tall, with a width of almost twice that. In late spring to early summer, it will bear 2" to 3" yellow flowers.

This cactus is native to Michigan.

Coneflower

Coneflower (*Echinacea*) is a native North America perennial sporting daisy like flowers with raised centers. Blooming from midsummer to fall, coneflowers are considered drought tolerant and rarely bothered by pests.



The flowers are a magnet for butterflies and the seeds in the dried flowers attract songbirds.

ANNUALS

Portulaca

Portulaca grandiflora, also known as moss rose, tolerates heat, humidity, drought and full sun. The plant that grows 4-6" tall, with a spread of 6-18" has vibrant 1" diameter flowers.



Other annuals to consider are cornflowers, dusty miller, lantana, gazania, sweet alyssum, blue salvia and zinnias.

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All the water there will ever be, is right now.

-National Geographic