

Environmentally Friendly Landscaping

Georgia's continuing drought has helped us all appreciate how important it is to conserve our water resources.

While many of us understand the value of water we may not know how our every-day activities can negatively impact our streams and reservoirs. Over the last 30 years water consumption per person has increased dramatically (see Fig. 1). As our population continues to grow, it becomes even more challenging to ensure our streams are protected from pollution and over-use.

Fig. 1. Water Consumption in Georgia

	Avg. daily water use
1965	50 gal/day
2000	200 gal/day

A large portion of our water is used outdoors for recreation, gardening and landscaping. In the summer, some households may use 100 percent more water for outdoor use than in the winter. Many homeowners over-water their landscape and much of that water is lost to evaporation or run-off.

Did you know....?

- **For each 1000 sq. ft. of landscape no longer irrigated you save as much as \$200 per year on your water and sewer bill.**

More info at: www.georgiadrought.org

When Etowah Water & Sewer Authority in Dawsonville, GA moved into their new building they wanted to use the site as a demonstration for cutting edge environmental protection techniques. Choosing to landscape the site to promote water conservation and pollution reduction was an obvious

opportunity lead by example. For a list of plants we used in the project see the following website!

Xeriscape™ -A Sensible Solution



Xeriscape™ landscaping is quality landscaping that conserves water and protects the environment. The term xeriscape™ (pronounced zeri-scape) is derived from merging the Greek word "Xeros," meaning "dry," with the word "landscape." Many people assume that a "water-efficient landscape" must involve cacti and other plants from arid climates.



Actually, all our native plants in Georgia are adapted to the natural cyclical rainfall patterns and can be included in landscaping with beautiful results! If you choose to use plants that are not native to Georgia in a water-efficient landscape it is important to make sure you don't choose a plant that is invasive (we certainly don't want another "kudzu").

A Xeriscape can significantly reduce outdoor water consumption without sacrificing beauty. Not only is Xeriscaping an environmentally sound landscape, requiring less fertilizer and fewer chemicals, it is also low maintenance -- saving you time, effort and money!

How Do I Get Started?

Establish Water-use Zones

A Xeriscape plan divides the landscape into three water-use zones: high (regular watering), moderate (occasional watering) and low (natural rainfall).

Xeriscape Basics

High water -use	-10% or less
Moderate water use	-20% or less
Low water-use	-50% or more

High water-use zones-small, highly visible areas and highly maintained areas of the landscape where plants are watered regularly in the absence of rainfall. Ideally high water use zones should account for no more than 10 percent of the landscape.

Moderate water-use zones-established plants are watered only when they turn a gray-green color, wilt or show other symptoms of moisture stress. Ideally, 20 percent or less of the landscape should be moderate water-use zones.

Low water-use zones- Plants are watered by natural rainfall and would not be irrigated. For greatest water conservation, design as much of your landscape as possible into low water-use zones. Most people are surprised to learn that the majority of our woody ornamental trees and shrubs, turf grasses, some



herbaceous perennials and even some annuals grow well in low water-use ones where they are not irrigated once they are established.

Fifty percent or more of your xeriscape should be low water-use.

We actually designed our project at Etowah Water & Sewer Authority to be **100% Low-water use!**

Environmentally Friendly Landscaping/Lawn Tips

From www.cleanwatercampaign.com

1. Plant natural vegetation to control erosion.
2. Test soil first before applying fertilizers.
3. Identify the bugs in your yard. Most are beneficial.
4. Direct rainwater from downspouts away from pavement into your lawn.
5. Check the weather forecast for predicted rain and don't apply fertilizer or pesticides before or directly after a rain. (You'll wash pollutants and \$ down the drain.)
6. Sweep up dirt/debris rather than hosing away with water.
7. Compost/Recycle yard waste.
8. Clean up pet waste.
9. Leave native vegetation and trees along streams
10. Plant native vegetation in yard.

Expect a slight loss of quality during extended dry periods, but don't be alarmed. Some plants will literally shut down during drought and cease growing. Learning to accept this "less than perfect" appearance during dry periods is one of the most difficult obstacles to overcome in a water-efficient landscape.

One exception to the water zone rule is newly planted ornamental plants and turf grasses. These plants require regular irrigation during the establishment period (8 to 10 weeks after planting), regardless of their intended water-use zone. For more info on Xeriscapes, contact the Georgia Water Wise Council (contact info below).

Why Did We Use Plants Native To North Georgia?

Plants native to our soils and climate in north Georgia generally require less fertilizer and pesticides, less water, and provide the best overall food sources for wildlife. Native plants may support 10 to 50 times as many species of native wildlife as non-native plants. Too often, exotic plants brought from other ecosystems spread rapidly and take over farms and woodlands, and decimate native plants and animals.



Since native plantings reduce the need for water and chemicals and can maintain or enhance biological diversity, wildlife gardeners concerned about conservation should strive toward incorporating native plantings as much as possible in their plans.

This brochure was financed in part through a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency under Provisions of Section 319 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act as amended.

What You Can Do:

- ✓ Buy or grow your own native plants. Be absolutely sure your nursery guarantees its stock is not dug from the wild.
- ✓ Join and become active in a native plant group.
- ✓ Promote the use of native plants in roadside, school, and commercial landscaping.
- ✓ Save native plant communities in your area. It's much harder to restore wild areas than it is to preserve them.

(From <http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/nativeplants.cfm>)

**Help us make a difference in the Etowah watershed!
Please look at your outdoor landscape and see what you can do to
make it more water, wildlife and pollution friendly!**

Other Resources:

Clean Water Campaign, 40 Courtland St., Atlanta, GA 30303, www.cleanwatercampaign.com,
email: kobrien@atlantaregional.com

Georgia Native Plant Society, P. O. Box 422085, Atlanta, GA 30342-2085 www.gnps.org
770-343-6000

Georgia Water Wise Council, 1033 Franklin Rd., Ste. 9-187, Marietta, GA 30067-8004 770-483-9474,
<http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/waterwise/wwc.htm>

Gardening With Native Wild Flowers by Leonard E. Foote, Samuel B., Jr. Jones

Georgia Water Wise Council, 1033 Franklin Rd., Ste. 9-187, Marietta, GA 30067-8004 770-483-9474,
<http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/waterwise/wwc.htm>

A Guide to Developing a Water-Wise Landscape- www.ces.uga.edu/pubcd/B1073.htm

Landscaping Revolution: Garden With Mother Nature, Not Against Her
By Andy Wasowski and Sally Wasowski

Landscaping with Native Plants of the South by Andy Wasowski

Native Plant Finder-National Wildlife Federation tool to locate information on plants native to the Southeast. <http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/nativeplants.cfm>

Trees of Georgia and Adjacent States by Claud L. Brown and L. Katherine Kirkman

Southeast Recommended Native Plant List (Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center)
http://wildflower.avatartech.com/Plants_Online/Clearinghouse/Factpacks/Southeast%20Book/S_E_Plants.PDF

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