

THE LATEST

DIRTY

SPRING 2001



XERISCAPING

AN APPROACH TO WATER CONSERVING LANDSCAPES

by David Lewis

What is xeriscape?

The word xeriscape is derived from the Greek word “xeros”, meaning dry, and was coined by the Denver Water Board when promoting a water conservation program in the 1970s.

Xeriscaping combines the use of drought tolerant plants, extensive mulching and efficient watering techniques, to create an attractive low maintenance garden. A xeriscaped garden may still require some watering during the summer months, but much less than a typical garden.

Why create a xeriscape garden?

A xeriscaped garden is much better in withstanding a sudden decrease in available water.

Mulch significantly reduces water evaporation from the soil while effectively smothering weeds. The garden requires less maintenance.

How do I create a xeriscaped garden?

A good site has an appropriate mix of sun and shade to suit the plants in the landscape plan. It should be sheltered from strong drying winds, and not too close to the roots of mature shrubs or

trees that may compete for moisture. If the ground is sloped, place the most drought tolerant plants at the top of the slope and the moisture loving plants at the base. The soil should be well

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drained. If there is heavy clay soil, incorporate sand and gypsum lime to help break it up. All soils will benefit from additions of organic matter (compost, well rotted manure, etc.) which is excellent at retaining water.

When designing a xeriscaped garden consider using drought-resistant plants. Plants should be

grouped together according to their sunshine and watering needs. In this way it is possible to have a garden that has sunny and shady areas, dry and moist areas, which can be watered accordingly. Mulch reduces evaporation from the soil surface while conserving moisture within the ground for use by the plants. Make sure you have a layer of mulch that is at least 2 to 3 inches deep.

How can I conserve water elsewhere in my garden?

Efficient watering, mulching, and careful plant selection make it possible to reduce water use in many parts of the garden.

Mulches are very attractive on flower and shrub beds and at the base of trees. Placement of moisture loving plants in naturally damp parts of the garden reduces the water they need. Remember that deep, infrequent watering will conserve water while helping plants to become more drought tolerant.

If you wish to contact David Lewis you can E-mail him at david-e-lewis@home.com.

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Deadline for submissions for the summer issue is July 13, 2001.

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Water Use Restrictions

Compiled by the CRD Water Department

Victoria relies on rainfall to fill our reservoirs. This year the precipitation has been 50% of the usual. To manage this shortfall the CRD Water Department has implemented an outdoor water use by-law. Currently the Capital Region is under Stage 3 water restrictions. In this stage, the goal is to reduce water consumption by 25 to 30%. Below is a summary of the Stage 3 water restrictions.

Landscape Watering

- Drip or micro irrigation that operates at low pressure (under 25 psi) and supplies less than 20 gallons of water per hour is permitted.
- Hand watering with a hand-held container or with a spring-loaded shut-off valve is permitted.
- Decorative fountains may be operated if they use re-circulated water.
- Soaker hoses and sprinkler watering is not permitted.
- Lawn watering is **not** permitted at any time.
- New sod or newly seeded lawns may not be watered at any time.

To help conserve water in the garden consider these suggestions:

- Using a thick mulch (5 to 10 cm) on the garden will help to reduce soil moisture loss and moderate soil temperatures.
- Weeding regularly will reduce competition for precious water in the soil.
- Raise your lawn mower height to its highest level. The taller

grass will help to shade the soil and reduce water evaporation.

- Water around the base of plants slowly and deeply, moistening the top 4 to 6 inches of soil.

Private Car and Boat Washing

- Hand washing of cars or boats is permitted only when using a hand-held hose with a spring-loaded shut-off valve or with a hand-held container.

Other Outdoor Uses

- Residential swimming and wading or hot tubs may not be filled.
- Exterior building surfaces, parking lots, driveways or sidewalks may not be washed with a hose.

General Guidelines

- No person shall damage or allow the deterioration of any appliance that will result in a waste of water.
- Restrictions do not apply to outdoor areas that may be required by law to be cleaned so as to comply with health or safety standards.
- Water restrictions do not apply to water from private wells or private irrigation water sources, however facilities that have such sources are encouraged to post signs indicating their water source.

The goal of the by-law is to stretch the remaining water supply and to maintain the high quality of water available to all citizens. If we each save a little, we all save a lot.

On the Air and In the News

Now more people will be made aware of the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre, thanks to a public service announcement produced by Camosun College student Christina Rawn. The announcement was produced as part of her media course at the college and can be heard on AM 900 The Village, the Camosun College radio station. Thanks to Christina for producing an excellent commercial.

The Centre's Geoff Johnson and Steve Young were featured on the CFA Open Line Gardening Show on Sunday, May 6th. In addition we were featured on The Q's Environmental Page and you may have seen Steve on Gordie's World, shown on CHEK 6 News on Wednesday, May 2nd.

The Centre was the subject of a front-page article in the April 18th edition of the Saanich News. A terrific photograph of volunteer Angela Hunter hard at work

turning compost accompanied the article. An abbreviated version of the article was also featured in the Esquimalt News on the same day.

We are hoping that all the publicity will attract more awareness to the importance of composting and to the programs offered at the Compost Education Centre. Our presence in the local media is paying off as we hear more and more folks telling us that they found out about us when they read the articles and the advertisements.



Many thanks to the City of Victoria for donating several yards of leaf mold to the Centre.

Upcoming Compost Club Lectures

All lectures take place at the Centre in the Straw Bale Building unless otherwise noted. Workshops start at 7 pm.

Wednesday, June 13

Hot Composting with John Stonehouse

Not enough compost? If you are looking for a way to speed up nature's process to yield more compost in less time, then hot composting is for you. Join John in this informative talk on building a hot compost pile and producing compost in five weeks!

Wednesday, August 8

Winter Veggie Gardening with Gillian Elcock

Yes, it is possible! Don't let this season go to waste. Learn the basics of starting your own winter veggie garden and extend your gardening season for yummy healthy vegetables.

Support these retailers who support composting in our community. Show your membership card and receive a discount on your purchases.

Dig This

Bastion Square,
Broadmead Village, and
Sidney

Big Barn Garden Centre

Borden Mercantile

Danica Nurseries

GardenWorks

Blenkinsop, Oak Bay, and
Old Island Highway

Hooked On Water Gardens

The Garden Path Organic Plant Nursery

Lynne's Little Elf Garden Centre

Meadow Oak Nursery

Thanks to these merchants
for their support.
Some restrictions may apply.

We would like
to thank the
Fernwood
Community
Association for
their support.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM was held on February 26th at the Cornerstone Christian Church in Fernwood. Despite a light turnout of members we enjoyed a productive and informative meeting.

Most of our present Board members were re-elected by acclamation and two more have been appointed. Here is our present Board:

President	Maria Miller
Vice President	Tom Watkins
Treasurer	Donna Sanford
Secretary	Farheen Haq
Director	Angela Deering
Director	Katherine Cook

We are pleased to welcome Farheen and Katherine to our Board and we extend our thanks to outgoing Board Member Dianne LeFebvre.

Thanks to our Compost Educator, Geoff Johnson, for an enjoyable and informative slide show on the topic of "Permaculture and Sustainable Living."

Thanks also to Sandy at The Parsonage Café for donating coffee, tea and providing us with delicious sandwiches and dessert treats.

Worm on the Web

It has finally happened! Our new website www.compost.bc.ca is up and running. We hope you will "surf-on-in" and check out some of the new features. Sign our Guest Book and let us know what you think of the site. Your comments will help to ensure that we are providing the kinds of information that you are looking for. As always our friendly worm presides over the site, making sure that there is lots of "wiggle room". **Thanks to Tom Spetter of Cyan Design for donating his time to design and build our site.**



Name That Worm Contest

Last call for entries! Contest closes June 30th. If you haven't already come up with a name for our new mascot then you should hurry. Grand prize is a worm composting kit valued at \$43.95. Send in your entry today!

Thanks to Gillian and the UBC Campus Sustainability Office for this:

ODE TO A WORM

by Alan Ginsworm

Oh wiggly, squiggly, squirming worm
 Most brilliant creature under terra-firm
 Builder of tunnels so exquisitely round
 Creator of dirt so deliciously ground
 Engineer-builder without college degree
 You eat up your work — and you do it for free.



Introductory Composting Course

This summer we will be offering a scaled-down version of our Master Composter Volunteer Training Program. It is designed to introduce newcomers to the art and science of composting and we hope it will enable more folks to become avid backyard composters as these volunteers go out and spread the dirt on composting.

The course will be offered on the weekend of July 7th and 8th. For further information, please contact the Centre at 386-WORM.

OUTREACH

Our mobile displays have been visiting shopping malls and retail centers all over Greater Victoria. So far almost 2000 people have stopped to pick up information about composting and to ask questions. Thanks to all the volunteers who have been staffing the displays and special thanks to Lynn Marie for coordinating all the events.

In June look for us in Oak Bay, in July we will be in Esquimalt and in August we will be on the Saanich Peninsula.

Site Update

by Geoff Johnson (VCEC site educator)

Now that spring has fully sprung, the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre has once again become a lush urban oasis, bursting with vegetative vitality. Camas is blooming, fava beans are forming, and fig leaves are unfurling. It is also a critter fest around here. Blue orchard mason bees abound, lady bugs are looking around for early aphid appetizers, and the worms in our slowly warming earth machine are now almost as feisty as our super-senior MCP volunteer, the incredible John Lee.

Despite the water restrictions, this water-wise site is flourishing. The combination of drought-tolerant native plants, drip irrigation, a rain catchment system, and heavily mulched, compost-rich soil will ensure a lasting lushness for months to come.

As for the organic veggie demo garden, most of the plentiful winter produce has been harvested and we are well on the way to cultivating compost-fueled abundance for the late spring. My experiments with zero-tillage in one of the beds have proven an awesome success, and anyone wanting to learn (or share) about this or any of the basics of organic gardening should come out to our weekly drop-in gardening sessions on Friday evenings 5:00pm - 7:00 pm.

Volunteer Update

by Lynn Marie

Holy composting cow patties! In the few short months since completing the Master Composter Volunteer Training Program, our volunteers have contributed over 170 hours of their time. Staggering! Their efforts have included site and office work at the Centre, school programs, mobile displays, banner making and work at our open house. Thank you! We were especially appreciative of the hours spent at our mobile displays. This season was very busy with our outreach events and we couldn't have done it alone! Our open house was a success thanks to those who shoveled compost, constructed worm bins, greeted visitors and staffed the kids' corner. The volunteer smoothie party was a nice finish for all the hours dedicated that week.

Congratulations and thanks go to Sam Kohn and John Lee for earning their Master Composter Certificates by donating over 30 hours of their time and talents. Sam was invaluable in the office and at our mobile displays, while John (now nicknamed "the Machine") donated his muscles and endurance at Springride Commons and in the Compost Centre gardens. Nice work! A big cheer also for Chris Wells, Leona Smith and Melissa Jozwiak who are following closely with their hours.

Thank you to past Master Composters, the Garth Homer Groups, and Board members who continue to volunteer. We value your time and commitment!

OPEN HOUSE

Approximately 170 people attended our open house in early May. Thanks to all our staff and volunteers who worked so hard to make this event a success. Congratulations to the winners of our door prizes.

Megan Halstead and M. Berry both won a watering wand/nozzle combination. Paul Galewitz received a hanging basket soaker kit. Nancy Prescott won veggie garden soaker kit. And Barb Bennett took home the grand prize of a backyard composter.

Thanks to Kevin Hale at The Home Depot for generously donating the prizes.

Special thanks to these members who have donated to the Compost Centre.

**Neil and Pat Boyle
Angela Deering
Jeannette Funke-Furber
FD Grady
Eithne Hogan
Myrna Ladouceur
Colleen Loader
Marlene Lovell
Walter Meyer zu Erpen
Darlene Monkman
Alison Phosy
Donna Sanford
Leslie Wicks**

A special thanks also goes to **Wes-Tech Irrigation** who generously donated \$230.00 worth of irrigation supplies. These drip irrigation systems are on display in the demonstration gardens. Thanks also to **RMX** for rocks and **C&F Gravel Mart** for their rock donations to Spring Ridge Commons.

