



Xeriscaping : gardening in the driest, meanest conditions

July is forecasted to be a very dry month. Finicky plants may seem to wilt after a few minutes of sun exposure. By now you may be tired of replacing plants or just tired of watering? Perhaps it is time to rethink the garden. Plants that survive naturally in your area are the ones best suited to your soil, climate and rainfall.

The meter is ticking when the hose is running. This has spurred a rush for rain barrels now available in all shapes, sizes and colours. The water is free and there are no restrictions on when it can be used.

Mulching goes hand in hand in helping the ground retain moisture. Depending upon the type, mulches help to reduce surface evaporation, improve water penetration and air movement and control soil temperature fluctuations. Mulch can also protect shallow-rooted plants from freeze damage and frost heave as well as improve soil structure and nutrient availability.



Drought-tolerant plants survive long periods of drought by storing water internally (think cactus) or by developing extensive root

systems (long tap roots). Many of these plants have an additional protection through a waxy coating that cuts down on evaporation or even hairs on the leaf surface that reflect some of the sunlight and thereby insulating the plant.



Selecting stonecrop sedum (above) and other succulent plants are not only drought-tolerant but favourites in rock gardens. *Echinacea* and *Coreopsis* have long blooming periods and also have drought-tolerant properties and they are not fussy about soil conditions. Plants that are glaucous or have that blue/gray foliage are also noted for being able to handle drought conditions. For example, *Yuccas* are a favourite and they reward us with those beautiful cream coloured spikey flower heads. Others that stand up to the heat are: Lavender, Yarrow, Valerian, Artemisia, globe thistle and rose campion (left).

Note that all of these examples have the blue/gray foliage. Others like *Asters*, oriental poppies, California poppies, Butterfly weed, Joe Pye Weed, *Bergenia*, daylilies, foxtail, all *Scabosias* and many

Euphorbias are happy with less or little water. There are many native plants that tolerant drought conditions. For example, foam flower, Meadow rue especially the sulphur coloured, very tall variety with its silver/gray foliage, sea kale and Plume Poppy, *Salvias* of all types, Mountain Fleece, Russian Sage to name a few. Plant more of these colourful, textured plants in your garden and you will not need to water once they are established.

There are many native shrubs and trees that fill this important part of any landscape design i.e., Locust, Serviceberry, Beech, Sumac. All of these trees grow in Ontario and once established, they are maintenance free. Shrubs like *Viburnum*, *Barberry*, *Syringas*, *Spireas* and *Weigelas* all do well with little moisture. Lastly, there are the ornamental grasses! Read all the labels carefully to be sure that you are getting what you ask for.

Lawns are the biggest users of water resources and they require constant care to make them look good. Watering deeply in the early morning or early evening helps to prevent evaporation. There are alternatives to a grass lawn and one of them is clover. Clover stays green even in the driest areas of your lawn. The lawn is brown but that clover, it gleams. It rarely needs to be mowed, it is quick to fill in bare spots, and it's soft to walk on, pest free and also aerates the soil.

Charlotte Vorstermans,
Master Gardener



Master Gardeners of Simcoe County

JUIY TO DO List

- Deadhead annuals for repeated blooming
- Establish good watering practices: once per week during early morning or early evening and water deeply.
- Top up water gardens regularly
- Thin vegetable crops to encourage better harvest.
- Train climbing vines to their supports
- Continue to stake plants as they grow
- Weed regularly to keep beds neat and tidy
- Turn compost and add to garden when ready. If you do not have compost use organic fertilizer.

Where to find us for free gardening advice!

ONGOING:

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca

- monitored daily
- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

SPEAKING EVENTS

July 6th, 2011, Alternatives to Pesticides: 10.30 am

Speaker Carol Dunk,

Stroud Library, 7883 Yonge Street, Innisfil

COMING EVENTS

July 19th, 2011 Master Gardener Meeting 4.00pm

234 Phillip Street, Stayner

TBA Fix up session for The Bob Rumball Centre.

UPCOMING ISSUE

Alternatives to Killing Weeds

*The bluebell is the sweetest flower that waves in summer air;
its blossoms have the mightiest power to soothe my spirit's care.*

-Emily Bronte

Garden Humour:

The real meaning of Plant Catalog terminology:

“Zone 5 with protection” is a variation on the phrase “Russian Roulette”.

The Real Dirt!

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ask a Master Gardener books containing answers to your most common gardening questions are available at any of these speaking engagements for only \$10 or Gardening Guides on request. Valuable references for you or as gifts for a gardening friend! Either e-mail jonbon@bell.net to order or call 705-436-5292



For information on arranging a lecture for your group please contact Joan Nieman-Agapas 705-721-9088. For more information on Master Gardeners, visit our website: and follow the links to

Simcoe County Master Gardeners.