

Conserve Water by Xeriscaping Residential Lawns

By Paul Loechl

With landscaping season in full swing, conserving military installations' water becomes ever more challenging as residents begin watering their lawns. One way to reduce water usage is to encourage xeriscaping at family housing. Xeriscapes are low water use landscapes that can be maintained on about half the water needed to keep up traditional landscapes while still providing lush green lawns and color.

The 1992 Energy Policy Act (EPAAct) requires that federal agencies implement all energy and water conservation measures with life-cycle cost paybacks of less than 10 years. Executive Order 13123 (Greening the Government through Efficient Energy Management) mandated the establishment of water and energy conservation goals for all federal agencies. As a result, the Department of Energy released documents that include guidance for water conservation. The Army (ACSIM) has released a directive for implementing these water efficiency goals. Installations are required to establish best management practices and prepare water management plans.

As part of its plan, Fort Sam Houston, Tex., asked the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (CERL) to prepare step-by-step guidance to help its residents practice water conservation through xeriscaping techniques. The result is a comprehensive, easy-to-understand handbook called "Green Living and Water Conservation." Fort Sam provided copies to residents and to installation grounds staff. They also keep copies in the natural and cultural resources office.

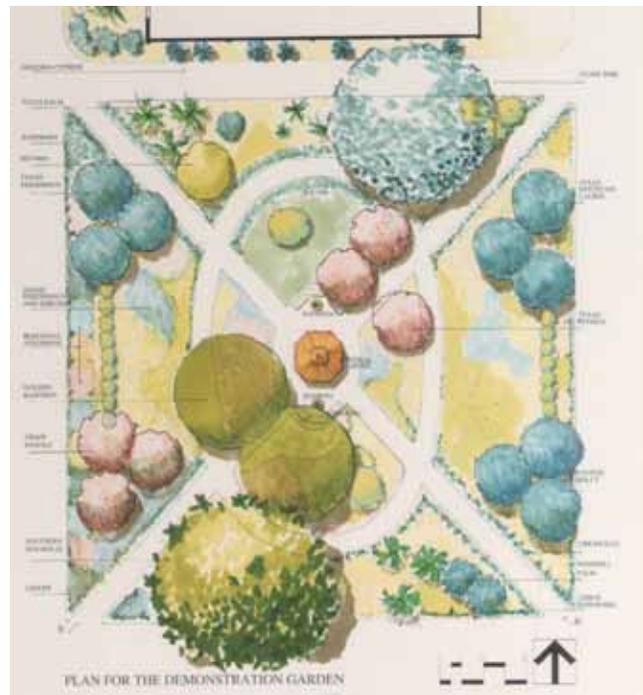
This handbook is being adapted as a Public Works Technical Bulletin and will be

available soon on the web at:

<http://www.hnd.usace.army.mil/techinfo>.

Although it was prepared for Fort Sam Houston, the basic concepts for xeriscaping can be applied to any geographic region. The plant list in the original guidebook is specific to Central Texas, although this information can easily be obtained for any region.

For questions about xeriscaping and other water-conserving measures, please contact Paul Loechl at CERL, telephone 217-352-6511, ext. 7443, Email: Paul.M.Loechl@erdc.usace.army.mil.



In a xeriscape, plants are matched to areas where they will consume the least water.

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