

# Lose your lawn and go native

With Oregon and the rest of the West experiencing significant drought, more and more homeowners are turning to natural landscaping or xeriscaping to minimize their impact on the environment — while still having a beautiful yard to enjoy.

Natural landscaping and xeriscaping have some similar characteristics, but they are not the same thing. Xeriscaping is focused on water conservation, using plants that require minimal water — but not necessarily native plants.

In Central Oregon, you can use native plants and reduce the demand for water in your yard — especially in comparison to a turf lawn.

“If planted in a suitable habitat, native plants are well adapted to our soils and climate,” A.J. Detweiler wrote in a paper for OSU Extension Service. “This reduces the need for supplemental water (once established) and maintenance, and makes it easy to maintain plant health.”

“There are a host of benefits to basing your landscaping around native plants,” Detweiler noted. “When

grown in the right conditions, native plants typically experience less environmental, insect, and disease damage than nonnative plants. Native plants also create the best environments for local pollinators and wildlife.

That’s an important point for Sisters Ranger District Ecologist Maret Pajutee.

“Protecting and planting natives helps support many native species that have evolved together with plants,” she said. “They generally use less water, need less care.”

Pajutee notes that “some natives are easy to grow from collected seed in the wild (blue flax, Oregon sunshine, penstemons) or through transplants.”

You can get a free transplant permit through the U.S. Forest Service to bring home plants from the wild. You need to know what you’re doing. Some native plants will not survive transplanting — you should leave all lilies and rare plants in place. You can get more information through your Forest Service transplanting permit.

Pajutee notes that nurseries have more native plants these days and can be a good source.

“Beware of wildflower seed mixes,” Pajutee warns. “They are rarely native wildflowers of the area and often contain weedy species.”

Pajutee also warns that “Some garden plants are invasive and can spread into natural habitats and cause great ecological harm. If you see your garden plants escaping to natural areas on public lands, please stop them!”

You can have a good afternoon’s outing, get some exercise and learn to identify and recognize our native plants through Deschutes Land Trust wildflower walks.

And, Pajutee notes, certified weed-free native grass and flower seeds are available from Deschutes Native Seedbank; email Berta Youtie at [byoutie@crestviewcable.com](mailto:byoutie@crestviewcable.com).

So if you want to conserve water, add beauty to your landscape and spend your Saturday doing something other than mowing the lawn — go native.



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