

# Alternative gardening can conserve water

■ Practicing 'xeriscaping', or drought gardening, allows conservation and beauty

Sue Ryan  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Here's something to keep in mind as the weather gets warmer: Watering the garden and lawn can use a large amount of water, especially in the summertime. The practice of "xeriscaping" conserves water in gardens with the practice of seven established principles: planning and design, soil improvement, appropriate plant selection, practical turf areas, efficient irrigation, use of mulches and appropriate maintenance.

"You can save up to 70 percent on a

water bill in the summer," said Toni Gwin, a botanist in Washington.

Xeriscaping, also referred to as drought gardening, began in the 1970s in Colorado. Begun as an earth-friendly practice, the techniques were actually developed by public utilities foreseeing a potential crisis. Cindy Wise, a Eugene resident, lived in Colorado when xeriscaping started.

"There was phenomenal growth in the Denver area. A lot of communities' capacity to treat and deliver water was inadequate," she said. "Basically you had escalating demand and static supply."

Today, Wise advises gardeners on xeriscaping through the Master Gardener program at the Extension Service. Her approach focuses on garden-

ing as a certain mindset rather than a strict set of rules.

"Be tolerant of less-than-perfection," Wise said. "Pick the one xeriscaping principle that makes the most sense and start with it. Allow plants to be a little brown, including your lawn."

Gardeners can also choose to group similar plants together. This helps conserve water by having low-water plants and high-water plants in separate areas. Plants stress less easily and use less water when grouped.

"It's every plant in the right soil and right place with the right amount of moisture," Gwin said. "But it's not high-desert plants that people often think of when they think of drought gardening."

Soil, especially the heavy clay

found in many parts of Eugene, can be amended. Small particles pack tightly together in clay soil, leaving little to no air space. Compost or organic amendments can be added to aerate the soil.

"This opens it up to add nutrients," Wise said. "This time of year you should get a 'glopping' sound when you dig. Right now the soil is as dry and workable as in June."

Mulching an inch or more on top of the soil in flower or vegetable beds is also a good idea. The mulch can be a commercial product, dead leaves or home-grown compost. Pam Henderson gardens full time now that she has retired as a forester from Oregon State University.

"Mulch stops water from evaporating away," she said. "Put down a soak-

er hose first, under the soil at the root level so it avoids evaporation. Then mulch over the top of it."

Other tips for conserving water in the garden simply urge people to be more efficient.

"Have your plants that need more water closer to your house and hose. Then you don't need to drag the hose across the yard to water plants and waste water," Henderson said.

Henderson advised people to keep the amount of new plants in gardens this summer to a minimum because new plants require more water than established ones. Experienced gardeners might hold off on plans to add a new flower bed or edge to gardens, keeping garden sizes smaller to conserve water.

## Smith joins Dems on energy bill

By Katherine Pflieger  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Gordon Smith broke with the Bush administration Tuesday to join Western Democrats in introducing legislation that would force federal energy regulators to impose price caps on the dysfunctional Western market.

No other Senate Republican — or the White House — has joined with Smith, R-Ore., to push for legislation that would order the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to institute temporary price caps on wholesale power.

Instead, Smith found himself flanked by Western Democrats, including Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell of Washington.

"It is a serious mistake for this government — and all of us — to defend a system ... that victimizes little folks in our society," said Smith, who authored the bill with Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif.

The West is facing an energy crunch brought on by a botched deregulation effort in California,

a lack of new generation capacity and a drought that is sapping the Northwest hydropower system, among other factors. President Bush warned Tuesday that California should expect more blackouts.

Energy prices are soaring throughout the Northwest and are threatening to get even higher.

Cantwell said the West makes up a third of the gross domestic product, and the energy issue is creating a crisis for the national economy.

If the bill goes into effect, it would require FERC within 60 days to set wholesale price caps or reasonable rates that are based on the cost of producing power. The caps could cover up to 11 states in the Western power market.

Critics of caps — including Vice President Dick Cheney, head of Bush's energy task force, and Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham — believe a free market can best handle the situation. They say price limits will discourage new generation capacity, one of

the major problems in the West.

But the bill's supporters say they've created a fix for that: the caps would not affect new energy facilities and would remain in ef-

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California

fect until March 1, 2003, when the new energy sources are expected to be coming online.

"We can impose a temporary control that does not discourage new energy production, that exempts new plants from the cap, and will pull us out of this crippling energy crisis," Murray said.

Smith and others concede the legislation may not have much of a chance until after what could be a painful summer, complete with rolling blackouts and angry consumers.

The bill has just six original sponsors. In addition to the four West Coast senators, co-sponsors are Sens. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., and Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn.

Smith said he has been meeting with Cheney and the administration to encourage a change in their position on caps. Smith is also hoping to get some Northeast Republicans to go along with his proposal.

"I really fear when I hear Dick Cheney and others talking in terms of brass-knuckles, free-market energy use," he said earlier in the day at the National Hydropower Association's annual meeting. "I won't help them with that."

In California, utilities are going bankrupt in part because under the deregulation law the state's consumers are protected by caps from high retail prices.

To remedy that, the bill says states that participate in the caps must allow their utilities to pass their costs onto ratepayers.

The bill won't be popular at home for Feinstein. But "California must pay its costs on," she said.

### InterSEXions Conference 2001

Leslea Newman

6PM, April 26th - Ben Linder Room

Activist, Poet and Author of *Heather Has Two Mommies*, shares her philosophies and perspectives on LGBT issues in our educational institutions.

Directly followed by a book signing sponsored by Mother Kali's Bookstore.

Debra Chasoff

6PM, April 27th - 180 PLC

A discussion with the Academy Award winning director about the current educational climate, concerning issues of sexuality and identity followed by a screening of the films "It's Elementary" and "That's a Family."

6PM, April 25th - Ben Linder Room

There will be a pre-screening of "That's a Family."

Young Women's Theater Collective

6PM, April 28th - Ben Linder Room

A group of 13-19 year old performers from the Eugene/Springfield communities, led by Robin Aronson, Ph. D., presents their perspectives and experiences with LGBT and other social issues.

Sponsored by:

The UO Standing Committee on LGBT Concerns, LGBT Education and Support Services Program, Humanities Center, Department of English, Center for the Study of Women in Society and UO Cultural Forum.

For more information contact Chicora Martin at 346-1134

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