

WATER WOES? GO XERIC!

By **RENEE STRUTHERS**
Staff Writer

Spring is here and with it thoughts of gardening. Now that the sun is out, many homeowners have broken out the garden tools and are busily sprucing up yards and digging out vegetable beds in anticipation of new plantings.

After last summer's brutal heat wave and amidst rising municipal water rates, some people may be searching for alternatives to thirsty Kentucky bluegrass lawns. There are lawn alternatives such as buffalo grass that are low-care and use much less water.

Another option is xeriscaping, planting drought-tolerant natives that bring beauty and diversity to our local landscapes while drastically cutting the amount of irrigating needed to keep plants happy and healthy. Especially on the scorching south and west sides of homes and businesses, or in those pesky "inferno strips" between the sidewalk and the street, xeriscaping can save you a bundle in the long run for a modest outlay of time and money.

First, getting rid of even part of a traditional lawn means less mowing, fertilizing, watering and weeding. Second, replacing lawn grass with native wildflowers, grasses and trees means local birds and pollinators have a ready source of food while you enjoy the free show.

Trees such as mountain ash, serviceberry and hackberry provide shade in the summer and fruit for birds all winter in smaller yards. Maple, walnut and oak are champion shade trees with lower water requirements, but need a lot more room



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Dee Armstrong, garden lead at D&B Supply in Pendleton, shows some of the drought-tolerant perennials available in their garden center.



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Silver thyme is a great drought-tolerant ground cover, and bees love it.

— and it takes forever for them to grow big enough to provide shade. When considering trees for your property, think about how big the tree will be at full growth and take into consideration the safest distance from your home or outbuildings, and any overhead power and utility lines. No one wants to plant a tree only to have to cut it down 10 years later because it's dropping branches on your roof, or the power company has threatened to "prune" it for you to keep it out of their lines.

Shrubs provide vertical in-

terest and structure. There are many natives that are well adapted to hot dry climates. Many varieties of sage exist that are beautiful and hardy in Eastern Oregon conditions, and shrubs like mountain mahogany, mockorange and Oregon grape are water-wise as well. Or plant fruiting shrubs like currant and gooseberry, or pruterberry, a cross of the two, and make some jelly to enjoy over the winter months. Any berries left on the bushes will be a welcome treat for overwintering birds.

There are many flowering perennials that will brighten up your yard year after year and bring pollinators by the hundreds. Herbs like oregano, thyme, bee balm and lavender are honeybee favorites. Mainstays such as agastache and penstemon will bring hummingbirds as well — and plant breeders continue to create new varieties in a rainbow of colors to suit every taste. And if you're looking for something to twine around a pergola or along a fence, hardy clematis and wisteria are available

in various shades, and native grape varieties thrive in less-than-perfect conditions once established.

Or try succulents for your hottest, driest areas.

"Euphorbia, sedums and other succulents are drought tolerant and really take a beating in the heat" while coming through with flying colors, says Dee Armstrong, garden lead for D&B Supply's garden center in Pendleton and former operator of Blueberry Hill Nurs-

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