

Xeriscape Handbook: A Gardener's Partnership with the Environment

Gayle Weinstein

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A thoroughly practical resource for water-wise gardening, this book neatly presents the conservation-minded home gardener or professional landscaper with the detailed information necessary to design and implement a landscape in tune with environment. Xeriscape landscaping wants to change gardening practices so they are attune with our natural ecological systems, thus becoming more efficient, less wasteful of water and better able to survive through the generations.

Measured against 20 years of gardening experience, this book is extremely well researched and thoughtful. Weinstein patiently shows how to look at a landscape with a new perspective by paying attention to the details of climate, topography, plant selection and energy maintenance levels. She shows how to incorporate this information into developing a balanced landscape plan. Indeed, this book puts the emphasis on planning the landscape and understanding the design process. Since functional design is the basis for xeriscape landscaping, Weinstein rightly places heavy emphasis on this process, giving us both ease of understanding and depth of subject.

The latter half of the book explores using the assets we already have in place, for example, knowing your soil and selecting appropriate plants is recommended over soil improvement. Weinstein also discusses methods to preserve soil, soil amendment choices, and wise use of compost, mulch and fertilizers. Only when all this is in place are we finally ready to plant. Here once again, Weinstein gives us much needed information on how to plant, water and irrigate as efficiently as possible.

This book sorts through and even challenges conventional labor intensive landscape practices, and makes a convincing argument that our gardens should be designed to enhance natural beauty and conserve natural resources. Better yet, she gives us all the tools we need to do this for ourselves.

JOYCE WARDWELL (January / February 1999)

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