

Xeriscaping™ for Indiana

Mary Welch-Keeseey, Ph.D.
Purdue University

Xeriscaping™ = reducing water use by purposeful landscape planning and purposeful garden management.

Things to do to reduce water use in your yard - ***Purposeful Planning***

- ❑ Select drought-tolerant plants. Plants native to Indiana are often drought-tolerant and can take the heat, cold, wet, and dry of Indiana weather. For a list of drought tolerant plants, both native and non-native, see page two.
- ❑ Group plants with similar water needs together. This lets you water just a small area frequently while letting the rest of your plants survive in drier soil. If your yard has a low spot, use it for your water-loving plants.
- ❑ Reduce the lawn area that is highly managed and irrigated. Perhaps you want the lawn in front of your house or in the children's play area to be lush and green. Water just this grass on a regular basis and let the rest turn brown and go dormant during dry weather.
- ❑ Get rid of some of your lawn. Groundcovers and drought-tolerant ornamental plants often need less water than lawns to survive and thrive.



Things to do to reduce water use in your yard – ***Purposeful Garden Management***

- ✓ Add organic matter to your garden soil. This will help make water more available to your plants. Organic matter helps both sandy soils and soils with lots of clay. You can use compost, decayed leaves, or baled sphagnum moss.
- ✓ Use mulch to help retain soil moisture. This will also help control weeds. You can use shredded bark, dried leaves, even stone. Mulch should be thick enough to reduce water loss from the soil but not so thick that it prevents rain from reaching the soil. One to two inches of mulch is usually sufficient. Remember to keep all mulch several inches away from the trunks of trees and shrubs.
- ✓ Follow wise watering principles. If possible, use a soaker hose in your garden areas. Whether you use a sprinkler or a soaker hose, water slowly so the water soaks into the soil. If it is running off instead of soaking in, reduce the rate of application. Don't water during the heat of the day when most of the water evaporates instead of going into the soil.
- ✓ Water your lawn deeply and infrequently. If you water only a little bit each day, the deeper roots will die from lack of moisture. Lawn grass should be watered to a depth of 4-6 inches. Don't water again until the grass shows signs of stress – a change in color or footprints that can be seen after you walk over the grass. Use a screwdriver to check how deeply you have watered. Push the screwdriver into the soil. It will move easily through damp soil and with more difficulty through dry soil.
- ✓ Water your garden plants deeply and infrequently. Trees, shrubs, and flowers should be watered to a depth of 8-12 inches then not watered again until they begin to show water stress (slight wilting, change in color) or until the upper soil is dry. To tell if soil is dry, squeeze a small handful. If it stays in a ball it is still moist; if it breaks apart, it is dry.



Drought-Tolerant Plants for Your Indiana Home

These plants will need to be watered the first year they are planted. Thereafter, they should need minimal watering. For the first three years after planting, trees and shrubs should be watered when weather has been extremely dry.

Annuals

Cosmos
Portulaca (moss rose)
Salvias
Annual vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*)

Wax begonia if planted in shade
Melampodium
Narrow-leaved zinnia
Avoid: impatiens

Perennials for shady areas

Bulbs (daffodils, crocus, etc) that go dormant by early summer
Native woodland wildflowers that go dormant by early summer (spring beauty, rue anemone, squirrel corn, etc)
Solomon's seal, included variegated form
False Solomon's seal
Siberian bugloss (*Brunnera*)
Sweet woodruff
Veronica speedwell
Goatsbeard (*Aruncus*)
Jack-in-the-pulpit

Green dragon
Liriope (can be invasive)
Coral bells (*only* in shade)
Foam flower (*Tiarella*)
Bishop's hat (*Epimedium*)
Lenten rose
Ajuga
Hosta
Lady's mantle
Wild ginger
Carex marowwii (a sedge)
Christmas fern

Perennials for sunny areas

Ornamental grasses – almost all
Herbs – thyme, oregano, sage
lavender, hyssop
Bulbs (tulips, daffodils, etc) that go dormant by early summer
Basket of gold
Pinks (*Dianthus*)
Catmint (*Nepeta*)
Hens and chicks (*Sempervivum*)
Sedum – all sizes
Leadwort (*Ceratostigma*)
Yarrow
Asters
Coreopsis

Purple coneflower (*Echinacea*)
Rattlesnake master
Euphorbias, if hardy
Blanket flower (*Gaillardia*)
White Gaura
False sunflower (*Heliopsis*)
Kansas gayfeather (*Liatris*)
Penstemons
Russian Sage
Salvias, if hardy
Goldenrod
Culver's root
Butterfly weed (*Asclepias*)
Yucca

Trees and shrubs

Junipers
Norway spruce
Scotch and Austrian pine
Sumacs
Hawthorns and crabapples
Catalpa
Buckeyes
Deutzia
Rose of Sharon

Spireas
Blue mist shrub (*Caryopteris*)
Cotoneaster
Witchhazel (in shade)
Potentilla
Many oaks
Jetbead (in shade)
Gray dogwood (in shade)
Hophornbeam (*Ostrya* – in shade)