



Gardening with Nature

by Sigrie Kendrick

EVENTFUL YEAR FOR XERISCAPERS

Xeriscape supporters are supporters of Mother Nature

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Photo: Contributed

A feature of the past year for the Okanagan Xeriscape Association, was creation of a new demonstration garden in West Kelowna, where OXA executive-director Sigrie Kendrick (right) and a volunteer are shown here weeding and mulching last fall.

Looking back on 2022, I can't help but be grateful for all the enthusiasm shown by people interested in conserving water by championing the use of xeriscape and the Okanagan Xeriscape Association.

After years of working with supporters in West Kelowna, OXA was able to open a second xeriscape demonstration garden—the West Kelowna Xeriscape Spirit Square Garden—in the Westbank Centre Park on May Street. We share the park with a dog run, kids spray park and a community garden.

We inherited a neglected space with challenges. The Mahonia, or Oregon Grape had run amok, along with the wily Elymus repens, or couch grass, which invaded the original plants and was choking them out, in league with a wide variety of other common garden weeds.

However, with great support from the West Kelowna Parks Department, who went above and beyond helping us clear out the existing garden debris, install root barriers against some of the worst weeds and brought in topsoil, the new garden soon took shape. Thank you so much for your support.

The city is supportive of xeriscape and realizes the importance of conserving water used on the landscape in a region which will continue to suffer devastating drought and wildfires as a result of climate change.

With the help of our board and volunteers, the new garden was designed, planted and received extra water so the xeriscape plants' roots could get established in the new site.

At our original garden—located at 4075 Gordon Drive in Kelowna—we continue to expand into the new space recently provided for us by the City of Kelowna, adjacent to our 13-year-old xeriscape demonstration garden and the wall of the H2O Aquatic Centre. It's called the UnH2O Garden.

Over the past 18 months, the expansion area was planted with a foundation of xeric trees, shrubs and alternatives to the common, but water-thirsty, cedar hedge.

Last fall, OXA volunteers and board members planted 147 perennials amongst those trees and shrubs, over the course of a challenging, but satisfying day.

We are always grateful for the support of our volunteers and board members who selflessly offer their time and energy. We share a common commitment to the health of our natural environment and its natural resources.

OXA would not be growing and evolving without the support of each and every one of you.

We are always delighted with new opportunities to showcase the beauty that is xeriscape and have included new species and cultivars in all our demonstration gardens that have been successfully trialed in volunteer gardens throughout the valley.

In both the new demonstration garden and the more-established one you will find spots to rest and reflect on your surroundings and to observe the birds and pollinators which flock to the gardens for sustenance.

If you're curious, go to www.okanaganxeriscape.org to see examples of the colour, beauty and sustainability that is xeriscape.

In the past year, OXA interacted with thousands of people through government, Interior Health, schools, Rotary organizations, Master Gardeners, strata councils, garden clubs and others, continuing to stress the importance of caring for our natural resources such as water.

Celebrate the new year by joining us in 2023. Re-new your membership or become a member of our not-for profit organization on our website, supporting OXA's message of water conservation and our ongoing commitment to the sustainability of this beautiful Okanagan Valley which we all call home.

Membership is just \$25 for individuals and \$40 for households, and includes many benefits which are outlined on our website.

Join us. You know you'll feel good about your decision to connect with other like-minded individuals working to be part of the solution.

Follow us on social media for inspiration on the beauty that is xeriscape and consider submitting photos of your garden to director_smedia@okanaganxeriscape.org to be featured in our Share your Garden segment.

As always, the Okanagan Xeriscape Association is extremely grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

Sigrie Kendrick is a Master Gardener and executive-director of the not-for-profit Okanagan Xeriscape Association and can be reached at 778-363-8360 or by email at exec_dir@okanaganxeriscape.org.

This article is written by or on behalf of an outsourced columnist and does not necessarily reflect the views of Castanet.