

Gardening with Nature

by Sigrie Kendrick

WORRISOME DRYNESS

Scary precipitation stats from Environment Canada

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Photo: Contributed

Sedums and Sempervivum are much better choices for our semi-arid environment than roses and foxgloves and will be available for purchase at the Okanagan Xeriscape Association annual Spring Plant Sale May 6

Well, the numbers are in, and they should terrify all of us.

March was an extremely dry month throughout the Okanagan Valley, with Kelowna experiencing its sixth driest month on record. To the north, Vernon had its fourth driest month on record and Penticton had its second driest March on record, with only 1.8 mm of precipitation compared with an average of 23.6 mm.

Those are some troubling numbers, especially when contrasted with a city skyline increasingly dotted with cranes, as Kelowna continues to be one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada.

Recently two Kelowna city councillors, Gord Lovegrove and Mohini Singh, discussed whether the City of Kelowna should declare a climate crisis. It's no wonder. Yes, this has to be our top priority.

Last Friday, the Okanagan Xeriscape Association held its first-of-the-season weekly Dig with Sig events, an opportunity for volunteers to help out in the demonstration garden, learn about xeriscape and connect with other gardeners.

Once we got our hands in the dirt there were multiple comments about how dry the soil felt. One only needs to look to the water issues plaguing the southern U.S. to see our potential future here if we don't start taking better care of our most precious resource, water.

One of the easiest steps to take to conserve water is to stop wasting so much of it on our household landscapes. Why do I continue to see new developments where acres of turf grass are being planted, along with thousands of cedars?

These two options have long been the go-to choice for landscapers because they are cheap to purchase and quick to install—but at what ultimate cost? Both are heavy water users and inappropriate for our dry climate.

We need our politicians to say "no more!"

I'm not a fan of rules and regulations, but if the landscape industry continues to make poor decisions, we need to legislate some not-so-common sense. We need a comprehensive strategy to address climate change in this beautiful valley we call home, and it can't come fast enough.

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After years of online classes, I am looking forward to hosting an in-person xeriscape class which will be held April 20 at 6 p.m. at the H2O Aquatic Centre on Gordon Drive in Kelowna, to be followed by a tour of our xeriscape demonstration garden, the UnH2O Garden.

Head to our website at www.okanaganxeriscape.org to register. One of the many benefits of an OXA membership is a discount on classes, so the first thing you should do is join us.

Our annual spring xeriscape plant sale and primary fundraiser for OXA will be held May 6 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Wild Bloom Nursery, 840 Old Vernon Road. It will feature a wide selection of xeric plants, a list of which will be posted on our website in the coming weeks.

On March 31, OXA drew two names from the updated membership list and presented \$25 gift certificates for that plant sale to Denise Oyelese of Kelowna and Edward Wilson of Vernon. Congratulations to both.