

CANYON FALLS
MIDDLE SCHOOL
1211 Frost Rd
Sunday, May 26th
10:00am - 3:00pm

Spring
OUTDOOR
MARKET

ENTRANCE BY DONATION



Know before
you throw

Do not bag your
items loose in your

Gardening with Nature

by Sigrie Kendrick

COVERING GARDEN GROUND

Glorious ground covers for your Xeriscape garden

Sigrie Kendrick - Apr 24, 2024 / 11:00 am



Photo: Sharon Spring

A great drought-tolerant ground cover for sunny or shady areas is *Persicaria affinis* Dimity which features spikes of rosy-red blooms, fading to pale pink as they age.

It has been said nature abhors a vacuum, and I have often reflected on this old adage when planning and planting gardens.

If you have a plant there, chances are, you won't have a weed. This is especially true when considering ground covers, which act as an organic, living mulch and don't need to be constantly topped up, as you would with a composted mulch such as Glengrow or Nature's Gold.

These living mulches mimic what happens naturally on the forest floor and include all the benefits we associate with mulch, in that they act as a weed suppressant, they moderate soil temperature, and they conserve soil moisture.

We will have a variety of ground covers available for purchase at the Okanagan Xeriscape Association's Spring Plant Sale on May 11. If you have either a baking, hot, sunny location or a spot with deep shade, we will have a ground cover to meet your needs.

For instance, the Moroccan Pincushion Flower, or *Pterocephalus depressus*, is a fantastic choice for those hot, sunny areas in your garden. This distinctive ground cover features greyish-green crinkled leaves which are tolerant of light foot traffic such as when used in-between flagstones.

Pterocephalus depressus is hardy in Zones 4 to 8, where it will form an evergreen mat a few inches high with a spread of 18 inches.

This ground cover flowers in late spring to summer with silvery-pink blooms similar to *Scabiosa*, which then transition into attractive silver seed heads. The blooms of *Pterocephalus depressus* are a magnet for a large variety of butterflies.

One of my favourite ground covers for a sunny to part-shade location is *Persicaria affinis* Dimity.

Also known as Himalayan Knotweed or Fleece Flower, this ground cover is as the common name suggests, native to the Himalayas, where it is found at altitudes up to 15,000 feet.

In our hot Okanagan summers, this *Persicaria* benefits from some afternoon shade where it will put on a display of rose-red blooms, ageing to pale pink, from July to October.

Ultimately, the flowers turn brown and remain on the plant, offering winter interest as well.

Persicaria affinis reaches a height of six to eight inches and a width of two feet. The leaves of this perennial turn brilliant bronzy-red as the temperature falls in the autumn, further adding to its value.

Lamium maculatum, known commonly as Spotted Dead Nettle, is an extremely versatile and easy-to-grow ground cover for a partial or full-shade location. This herbaceous perennial is hardy in growing Zones 4 to 8, completely appropriate for gardens in the Okanagan, where it will brighten a shady area with its heart-shaped variegated leaves even when not in bloom.

The cultivar "White Nancy" features silvery green leaves with a thin dark green margin and small white, hooded flowers. *Lamium maculatum* is extremely long blooming, beginning in late spring and continuing for months with some re-bloom in the fall. This ground cover is virtually disease and pest-free and is not favoured by deer.

It is extremely easy to propagate *Lamium maculatum* by stem layering. Simply push a stem, which is still attached to the mother plant, into the ground and cover it with soil, leaving only the tip visible. This tip will soon form a new plant.

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We've set May 11 as the date for our annual spring plant sale, to be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Wild Bloom Nursery, 840 Old Vernon Rd., Kelowna.

As in previous years, we will hold a members-only sale with refreshments on the day prior. Consider becoming an OXA member for this benefit and many others listed on our website at okanaganxeriscape.org. Stay tuned to our social media accounts for all the upcoming details.

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board and is proud to be collaborating with them on their Make Water Work campaign.

Sigrie Kendrick is a master gardener and executive-director of the non-profit Okanagan Xeriscape Association.

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