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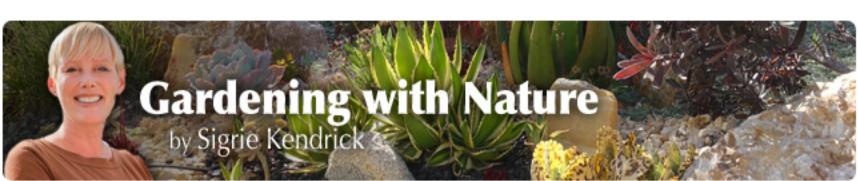
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CLIMATE APPROPRIATE PLANTS

Choose native plants to combat extreme weather

Sigrie Kendrick - May 8, 2024 / 11:00 am



Photo: Contributed

Aster Conspicuus is a native plant often planted in xeriscape gardens and available at Saturday's Okanagan Xeriscape Association Spring Plant Sale in Kelowna.

One sensible method of adding climate resilience to your garden, and combatting the effects of the extreme weather conditions we've experienced the past couple of years, is to choose plants native to the area.

One of the most significant benefits of plants native to the Okanagan, is their adaptability to the

local climate and soil conditions. Thriving in the environment where they evolved, these plants require minimal maintenance once established, reducing the need for excessive watering, fertilizers and pesticides. This resilience is especially vital in the face of climate change, where erratic weather patterns

demand plants withstand extreme fluctuations in temperature and precipitation. Native plants are vital for maintaining biodiversity as these species provide essential food and habitat for local wildlife, from pollinators like bees and butterflies to birds and small mammals. They also play a crucial role in water conservation, adapted as they are to our semi-arid environment.

With their deep, extensive root systems, native plants successfully reduce runoff and effectively

prevent soil erosion. If you are searching specifically for native plants, or their cousins that have been hybridized, look

no further than the annual Okanagan Xeriscape Association's Spring Plant Sale this weekend, where we will have a large variety available. It wil be held May 11 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Wild Bloom Nursery, 840 Old Vernon Road in Kelowna. As in previous years there will be a member-only pre-sale at the same location from 5 p.m. to 7

p.m. fFriday evening (May 10) with a Happy Hour welcome table. Consider becoming an OXA member for this benefit and many others listed on our website at

www.okanaganxeriscape.org. We will have hundreds of xeric plants available for purchase and experts in xeriscape on hand to answer all your questions. Both XEN and Wild Bloom nurseries will be in attendance as will the master gardeners, who can answer all your questions about gardening and plants. For those looking for a Mother's Day gift,

visit the OXA table where we will have a membership package, including gifts as well as a membership in OXA. A few of my favourite native perennials which will be available are Allium cernuum, Aster conspicuus, and Geum triflorum.

Allium cernuum or "Nodding Onion" is easily grown in dry, well-draining soil in full sun or partsun.It features grass-like foliage to a foot high with nodding clusters of lilac blooms appearing through the summer. Allium cernuum does not suffer from any serious pest or disease and its oniony fragrance acts as a deer deterrent.

Aster conspicuus, known commonly as "Showy Aster," features blue-purple flowers reaching two feet high with a width of up to three feet. This aster is extremely long-blooming, beginning in June, (earlier than many asters) and continuing well into fall.

The common name for this aster indicates just how much value it gives both to you, and the many species of pollinators attracted to its flowers.

Geum triflorum, commonly referred to as "Prairie smoke" or "old man's whiskers," is a spring-

blooming herbaceous perennial bearing clusters of nodding reddish-pink flowers on stems reaching 12 to 18 inches high. Almost more interesting than the blooms are the silvery seed heads which follow, resembling puffs of smoke and leading to its common name. Its fern-like foliage remains attractive all season and turns deep red as temperatures drop in the fall.

We will have a complete list of all the plants available at our sale on the website at okanaganxeriscape.org.

Consider setting aside a portion of your garden in which to include and appreciate the beauty of

Aster conspicuus, Allium cernuum, and Geum triflorum, which extends far beyond mere aesthetics. These native plants are integral to our local ecosystem and in embracing them we foster a deeper appreciation for our beautiful Okanagan Valley and a sustainable approach to gardening.

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.