

Fall Progress Report for the Okanagan Xeriscape Association
Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program

Submitted to: The Okanagan Basin Water Board

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The Okanagan Xeriscape Association



1. Background

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association (OXA) is a not-for-profit organization that was formed in 2009 to provide xeriscape information for the Okanagan. The vision of the OXA is for xeriscape gardening to become a desired and accepted norm in the Okanagan.

The mission of the OXA is to empower Okanagan residents to bring xeric landscapes to their homes, places of business and communities by:

- providing a knowledgeable and centralized source of xeriscape information;
- working closely with local nurseries to create a viable market for xeric plants; and
- promoting the benefits and beauty of xeriscaping.

Within its first year of operation, the OXA will work towards achieving this mission by offering hands-on xeriscape workshops, classroom education, public xeriscape demonstrations, a comprehensive website with information on how to xeriscape and many xeriscape resources and links, and a searchable on-line plant database - all of which provide residents with the tools they need to create xeriscaped yards, communities, and places of work.

2. Projects Accomplished

Website

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association website will be launched in the third week of September, 2009 at www.okanaganxeriscape.org. It is a centralized hub of information that provides simple and knowledgeable information on the Seven Principles of Xeriscape (the steps to creating a xeric landscape). There are also tips on how to get started creating a xeriscaped landscape that will address commonly asked questions.

The website includes a gallery with photos and stories about how people in the Okanagan have xeriscaped their yards, as well as links to other on-line xeriscape websites and a reading resource list. The website includes a page profiling the climate and biodiversity of the natural Okanagan landscape with photos to provide international readers with information on how the climate and terrain compares with their own place on the earth. Perhaps the most exciting feature on the website is the xeric plant database, which helps residents to choose the right plants for their particular needs.

On-Line Searchable Plant Database

The on-line plant database is a plant finder tool provided free of charge to users through the website. Users can search for plants by entering specific criteria that includes the type of plant (e.g. ground cover, shrub, tree), plant water and light requirements, height and spread, color and bloom time, type of foliage, and thirteen different special attributes such as attracts hummingbirds and butterflies, native to the Okanagan, good for erosion control, and winter interest. The database includes photos and detailed information on each plant.



3. Projects Currently in Progress

Xeriscape Demonstration Garden

The OXA has partnered with the City of Kelowna to create a demonstration xeriscape garden on a 4,000 square foot site in front of the new H2O Adventure Centre in the Kelowna Mission area to show people ways they can create beautiful xeriscape landscaping that uses little water.

The garden will include a Mediterranean garden, a butterfly garden, an ornamental grass garden, and a native plant garden, giving people clear examples of what they could do in their own yards. It will also be used to teach xeriscape classes and workshops offered by the OXA.

Work on the garden has already begun with the concrete for the garden's walkway poured this summer by the City of Kelowna's parks division, and design work done by a consultant with the cooperation of the landscape architect retained by the city to landscape the new swimming facility.

The OXA has already been granted some funds from the Okanagan Basin Water Board to help get the project off the ground, but still needs a partner to help build the garden this fall. The total cost for materials such as plants, soil, hardscape materials and irrigation is \$43,600 - of this \$11,800 has already been donated by the city and the OBWB. Four Okanagan Rotary Club chapters have been approached to be the final partners, bringing a joint donation of \$31,800.

Class Instruction

A series of classes and workshops will be offered in the spring of 2010 to teach people about the principles and applications of xeriscape. A number of experienced instructors have been identified and will work together to create and deliver an effective curriculum. The first class topics will include:

- An Introduction to Gardening the Xeriscape Way
- Principles of Xeriscape Design
- Native Plants of the Okanagan

4. Other Accomplishments To Date

Marketing

The OXA has developed a logo to aid in the creation of awareness and recognition of the Association. Business cards and an informative brochure will be completed by the third week of September.

Public Relations

A three page feature on aspects of xeriscape gardening appeared in the February 22nd edition of the Capital News. It included two paragraphs at the end introducing the Okanagan Xeriscape Association. To generate more awareness, a press release will be sent to other community newspapers in the valley when the website is complete.



Community Presentations

All of the following presentations serve to promote the efficiency and beauty of xeriscaping for our region.

February 6th – Gwen Steele gave a presentation at the Okanagan Institute on life in the soil, and the importance of protecting soil micro-organisms. Examples of how to do this were directly connected to several of the xeriscape principles.

March 8th - Gwen gave a similar presentation to the Unitarian Fellowship.

March 26th – Lisa Masini gave a presentation at the Okanagan Institute on xeriscape landscape design.

March 28th – Lisa Masini gave a presentation at the Knights of Columbus Annual Ladies Luncheon on xeriscape landscape design.

Sept. 18th - Lisa and Gwen will have an information booth at the conclusion of the OBWB AGM to raise awareness of OXA in the valley.

Sept 20th – Lisa will give a presentation at the 4th Annual Okanagan Organic Festival on xeriscape landscape design.

Sept 20th – Gwen will promote OXA and xeriscaping at an information table at the Green Housing Symposium in Upper Mission.

Administrative

The organization was registered in spring of 2009 with the BC Names Registry as the Okanagan Xeriscape Association and incorporated as a B.C. society. Board members were selected to represent different areas of need for the new Association, with the first Board meeting held February 16.



The OXA is governed by a volunteer board of five directors: (from top left clockwise) Oksana Fodor - Treasurer, Melodie Hope – Director, Lisa Masini - Vice President, Gwen Steele - President, and Judie Steeves – Secretary.

