

Gardening

Mark Earth Day by planning an eco-friendly yard

Sunday, April 22 is Earth Day—time to celebrate the wonderful abundance and interconnected web that supports life on earth.

It's a day to look at what we can each do to support life systems so they function well for generations to come. We can begin at home in our yards/gardens by removing some labour-intensive, water-thirsty (and often chemically dependant), monoculture lawn.

Here are two options:

- Sheet mulching

Cut a small area of grass very short, soak the ground well and cover with an overlapping-layer of wet cardboard (hose



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Deer resistant daffodils add early colour in ornamental grass garden. Grasses will grow up to hide dying bulb foliage.

down on both sides). Top with four inches of organic matter (whatever you use as a mulch) and water heavily. In two to six

months the lawn will rot and be ready to plant through mulch and cardboard.

This method doesn't work on fast-draining, sandy soils or if you have perennial weeds such as field bindweed.

- Turf removal

Rent a turf cutter. Cut off turf and stack to compost or to be the base of garden berms. If it contains invasive weeds, haul it to the landfill compost. Cover with about four inches of organic material such as Glenmore Grow, compost or well-rotted manure. Till into the soil, then plant and mulch.

To avoid nicking tree roots, which caus-

es suckering, cut the lawn very short under trees and cover it with flipped-over turf to kill it.

Ideas to replace lawn:

- Mulched plantings of mixed blooming shrubs (spaced for mature size) that attract pollinators and a variety of songbirds. Select for shape, leaf colour and texture, bloom time and winter interest.
- In areas that won't be walked on, a drought tolerant ground cover such as blue rug juniper is a very low maintenance option, or use woolly thyme that can stand up to some foot traffic.

- Food gardens - vegetables, berry bushes,

fruit trees that don't need a lot of spraying (i.e. apricot, plum)

- Plant a plot of continuous bloom for pollinators so you become part of the Kelowna Nectar Trail (<http://borderfreebees.com/resources/>)

- Hardscape pathways can be made of interesting materials and curve invitingly to add a sculptural element.

Food, flower and pollinator gardens are all big hits with children. Get them involved.

If you want to get to know your neighbours better, and you like to grow flowers, vegetables or herbs, plant these out front. While you are enjoying tending them, you'll get to know your neighbours as they walk by. Be prepared to talk gardening and be the trend-setter on your block. This idea is contagious.

The plant database at www.okanaganxeriscape.org is very useful for finding appropriate plants to suit your criteria.

OXA's xeriscape plant sale, May 5 from 9 a.m. to noon, in the unH2O Garden in front of the H2O Aquatic Centre is a great place to get plants to replace some of your lawn. Plant list is on the website.

To learn more and to register for the xeriscape class April 28 at Summerland Ornamental Gardens visit www.okanaganxeriscape.org

Gwen Steele is executive-director of the non-profit Okanagan Xeriscape Association.



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