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## Gardening with Nature

by Sigrie Kendrick

### THE RIGHT TIME TO PLANT

# Perennials are better planted in fall, not spring

Sigrie Kendrick - Sep 14, 2022 / 11:00 am



Photo: Contributed

Two volunteers in the UnH2O Garden at 1470 Gordon Drive in Kelowna.

We humans are certainly creatures of habit and often continue our habits without questioning why. This includes seasonal garden tasks.

Why, for instance, have we traditionally tried, with almost maniacal zeal, to plant all of our trees, shrubs, vines, perennials and annuals in the spring? Of course, annuals must be planted in the spring, as by nature they only live for one season and are not winter-hardy, but what about all the other plants we attempt to cram into our gardens before the heat hits?

Fall is a much better time for planting perennials.

Your garden soil in autumn retains the warmth of the summer yet the ambient temperature is cooler thereby allowing your plants to focus on establishing the good healthy root system necessary for a thriving garden.

Fall plantings will be better able to establish a healthy root system and then slowly move into the dormancy of winter, emerging the following spring better prepared for future "heat domes".

Our spring-installed plants are rudely met with hot, dry and increasingly windy Okanagan summers before having the time to establish a healthy root system. Fall planting allows you to work with nature and use the natural autumn and winter precipitation to your advantage, rather than running around with hoses and buckets trying to keep new garden additions watered in the summer heat.

One of the challenges of fall planting originates within the horticultural community as it has traditionally focused on spring planting and has ordered plants to meet the needs of gardeners starved of the chance to get their fingers in the soil.

### OXA's first fall plant sale

In welcoming autumn planting, the Okanagan Xeriscape Association is holding its first fall plant sale this year, and we hope to encourage others to embrace the idea of putting in perennial plants in the fall.

Many of the plants featured in our plant database will be available for purchase at our first-ever fall plant sale which will be held at the UnH2O Xeriscape Demonstration Garden, 4075 Gordon Drive, Kelowna on Sat., Oct. 1 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Keep an eye on the OXA website for more details in the coming weeks, and follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

You'll also find fantastic photos of inspiring xeriscape gardens from around the valley which dispel the myth that xeriscape is simply rocks and cacti.

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association has recently expanded its plant database at [www.okanaganxeriscape.org](http://www.okanaganxeriscape.org).

Why not peruse the new additions, all of which are xeric selections with good heat resistance, chosen for success in our semi-arid Okanagan Valley?

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is extremely grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board and is proud to collaborate with their Make Water Work program. Watch for me at nurseries this season promoting their plant collection.

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