



Gardening with Nature

by Sigrie Kendrick

DROUGHT-TOLERANT PLANTING

Plant now for spring garden colour

Sigrie Kendrick - Oct 12, 2022 / 11:00 am



Photo: Contributed

Early spring crocuses can add a splash of colour to your garden.

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is extremely thankful for all of the support from both volunteers and the community last weekend at our first-ever fall plant sale.

It was a big success and will be repeated next autumn, as we continue to educate gardeners about the many benefits of planting perennials in the fall.

I would love fall, if it were not followed by winter. To me, in addition to perennials, fall is the ideal time to get a jump on next year's garden by planting bulbs for early spring colour. There are many drought-tolerant bulbs available to consider which will enliven your early garden with pops of colour.

Drought-tolerant, or technically drought-avoidant, bulbs bloom before the heat of the summer season and benefit from dry conditions once they have finished blooming. Because our mandate is to help educate people about ways to conserve water used on the landscape, promoting spring bulbs is right up there with hiking for a fun fall activity, in my books.

One of the earliest bulbs to appear in spring is Winter Aconite (*Eranthis Hyemalis*), which pokes its cheery yellow head up as early as late February, often in the same time frame as snowdrops, although it is not as common. It is well worth searching out this bulb as it will naturalize in your garden and in time allow you to share some bulbs with your friends.

It seems that few gardens in the Okanagan are untouched by marauding deer so homeowners are always on the lookout for plants those pesky animals tend to shun. Another great bulb for the spring garden is the Turkestan onion (*Allium karatievense*), a member of the onion family. That means it is "stinky" to deer, although not to us, and as such it's usually not on the menu for our four-legged friends.

Another bulb they tend to go by without nibbling is the narcissus family. These can provide up to six weeks of bloom with a selection of early, mid- and late-flowering varieties, plus they are readily sourced at nurseries or big box stores.

One of the varieties we planted recently in the OXA UnH2O Xeriscape Demonstration Garden on Gordon Drive is the absolutely-stunning *Narcissus poeticus*, which is, ironically, one of the oldest daffodils to be cultivated, dating back to ancient times.

I'm enamoured with its simple shape and pure white petals, so different from the brassy yellow we usually associate with daffodils.

No matter what you decide to plant this fall, the anticipation of a colourful array of spring flowers from your fall bulb planting will help you through the dark winter days to come.

Consider joining us and enjoy some of the many perks of membership with like-minded gardeners.

Details and perks of membership are available on our website, www.okanaganxeriscape.org, along with an extensive plant database of xeric plants.

...

I am aware that many of you are having your irrigation blown out, a typical October occurrence, but please remember we have had an extremely long period of drought in recent months with no measurable precipitation expected in the near future.

Sending your garden into winter dry is a sure recipe for plant loss as even dormant plants require water to maintain plant health. Water acts as an insulator in the garden with moist soil staying warmer than dry soil. Also, plant cells that are turgid will be better able to weather cold damage.

Please make sure everything is well-watered before the ground freezes even if that means dragging around the hose.

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is extremely grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board and is proud to collaborate with its Make Water Work program.

Sigrie Kendrick is a master gardener and executive-director of the Okanagan Xeriscape Association and can be reached at 778-363-8360 or by email at exec_dir@okanaganxeriscape.org.

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