

# Xeriscape Field Checklist — Do-It-Right Guide

Print this one-pager and carry it on-site. Check off each step while building your xeriscape garden USA.

## Planning & Site Audit

- Sketch property lines, doors, gates, utilities
- Note sun by hour for a hot week; mark reflective heat near walls/driveway
- Trace roof downspouts and natural runoff paths; pick capture zones
- Define use-zones: entry, seating, trash path, pet run, storage
- List priorities: what must look great from the street vs. can stay simple

## Turf Removal & Grading

- Remove the thirstiest turf first; preserve soil biology where possible
- Rough grade to push water toward basins, not sidewalks
- Maintain ~1-2% slope away from the house; protect foundation
- Plan swales or rain gardens to store stormwater on site

## Irrigation & Hydrozones

- Group plants by water need; separate valves per hydrozone
- Replace sprays with pressure-compensating drip; flush and test emitters
- Program controller by minutes and inches, not calendar habits
- Install filter and pressure regulator; label valves for tweaks

## Soil Conditioning & Mulch

- In clay, improve drainage locally in trenches; avoid over-amending
- In sand, add compost where plants need nutrient hold
- Mulch to 3"; keep 2-3" clear from stems and trunks
- Use rock/gravel in high-flow channels to prevent washouts

## Planting Sequence

- Place structure plants first (trees/shrubs), then perennials, then groundcovers
- Set root flare at or slightly above grade; water-in at planting
- Stagger bloom times; aim for 3 foliage textures per bed
- Respect mature width to avoid chronic pruning

## Hardscape & Edging

- Install steel or concrete edges before planting to protect roots
- Choose permeable surfaces (gravel, DG with stabilizer) for patios/paths
- Add stepping pads in high-traffic routes; check level and compaction
- Use knee-height path lights; avoid glare to the street

## ☐ Watering & Establishment (8-12 weeks)

- Deep water 1-2x/week, then taper; probe soil to verify moisture
- Adjust for heat waves: extend runtime, not frequency
- Watch for runoff; immediately fix emitters and basins

## ☐ Seasonal Care

- Spring: flush drip, top up mulch ½-1", cut back winter dieback
- Summer: spot-weed monthly; reduce runtime if leaves yellow
- Fall: reset controller; divide grasses if crowded
- Winter: inspect stakes and ties, clean filters, update plant map

## ☐ Budget & Rebates

- Get 2-3 quotes for turf removal and drip retrofit
- Check water-district rebates for lawn conversion and smart controllers
- Phase work: 1) edges/grade, 2) trees/shrubs + drip, 3) perennials/groundcovers

## ☐ Tools & Materials

- 25' tape, landscape paint, stakes, level
- Pruning saw, loppers, hand trowel, mattock
- Drip kit (regulator, filter, ½" poly, emitters, hole punch)
- Mulch (3"), gravel/DG for paths, steel edging; fabric only under gravel

## ☐ Quality Checks

- No mulch touching trunks; no fabric under plant beds
- Emitters within the root zone, not on the stem
- No low spots holding water near the foundation
- Controller program labeled by zone; photo the settings

## ☐ Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Over-amending the whole yard instead of targeted fixes
- Planting too deep; the root flare must be visible
- Mixing high and low water plants on one line; split hydrozones
- Overwatering new xeric plants; allow partial dry-down between cycles

## ☐ Three Golden Rules

- Measure water in minutes and inches, adjust by soil feel and plant response
- Group plants by hydrozone; each zone needs its own drip line and schedule
- Set edges and grade before planting so traffic never crushes fresh roots

Keep this sheet on a clipboard or save it to your phone for on-site checks.