



Gardening with Nature

by Sigrie Kendrick

GARDENS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Fight the impacts of climate change on your garden

Sigrie Kendrick - Mar 1, 2023 / 11:00 am

The past eight years were the warmest on record—proof, if needed, that climate change is here.

That was just one fact brought to the table by Mario Lanthier, owner of Crop Health Advising and Research, at a recent workshop on xeriscape for professionals, held in Kelowna by the Okanagan Xeriscape Association.

He brought graphics illustrating the warming trend and discussed the challenges facing their lives as plants struggle to cope with increased temperatures, and the importance of providing our plants with the best start in life in our landscapes. That means we must begin by amending the soil in planting areas with water-retaining organic matter and installing efficient irrigation, since plants—even xeric ones—need adequate water to get their root systems established in the first year or two of their growth.

Lanthier recently returned from professional conferences in Europe and talked about tree species which are better able to thrive in our warming future. I was not surprised to find that two of them are already planted in our xeriscape demonstration garden, as promising species in our arid climate.

Syringa reticulata, commonly known as Ivory Silk Japanese Tree Lilac, and *Koelreuteria paniculata*, Golden-Rain Tree, have been growing successfully in the UnH2O xeriscape demonstration garden in Kelowna since 2010.

Joan Byrne, owner of Wild Bloom Nursery and OXA President, talked about her favourite new perennial cultivars for xeriscape landscapes. *Penstemon pinifolius*, *Salvia nemorosa* 'Sky Blue Marvel', *Panicum virgatum*, and *Cotinus coggygria* 'Velveteeny' were among her selections.

All of the above can all be viewed in one of our two demonstration gardens, in Kelowna and West Kelowna, and many others she discussed will be available for purchase at our annual spring plant sale.

Josh Smith, manager of Xeriscape Endemic Nursery, gave a presentation on the beauty of native Okanagan plants and their uses to help with erosion control. He talked about the many ingenious ways plants survive periods of drought and discussed how he uses natives as the most successful approach in stabilizing slopes on the many challenging properties rising up from the valley bottom.

New advances in irrigation aimed at water conservation was the topic of SiteOne Irrigation, as the company is keen to educate homeowners and professionals alike about the many new technologies aimed at decreasing water consumption on your landscape.

In my next column, I'll tell you about Egan Davis's presentation of the long grass movement in passive turf areas.

Spring is just around the corner and I can't wait. Two of my favourite indicators of the beginning of the growing season are the opening day of The Greenery on Feb. 25, a pilgrimage for more than 20 years, and the Master Gardener's Seedy Sunday on March 12, where the OXA will have a table. Come visit us with your xeriscape questions at Parkinson Recreation Centre. Seedy Sunday will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Become a member of the Okanagan Xeriscape Association by visiting our website at www.okanaganxeriscape.org

Membership costs \$25 for individuals and \$40 for households and include many benefits, all of which are outlined on our website. Memberships received before the end of March will be eligible to win one of two \$25 gift certificates to be used at our annual spring plant sale.

Follow us on social media for inspiration on the beauty that is xeriscape and consider submitting any photos of your garden to director_smedia@okanaganxeriscape.org to be featured in our Share Your Garden segment.

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