



DROUGHT-TOLERANT PLANTS

Drought-tolerant perennials a good choice for your garden

Sigrie Kendrick - Sep 13, 2023 / 11:00 am



Photo: Contributed

Happy gardeners took away thousands of drought-tolerant perennials last year at the Okanagan Xeriscape Association's fall plant sale, which will be held Sept. 23, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. this year at the Xeriscape Demonstration Garden on Gordon Drive in Kelowna.

It's almost sale time.

Mark your calendar for the non-profit Okanagan Xeriscape Association's second annual fall plant sale Sept. 23 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in our xeriscape demonstration garden in front of the H2O Aquatic Centre at 4075 Gordon Drive in Kelowna.

Fall is the best time of year to plant perennials, giving them an opportunity to begin to get established before the hot and dry conditions of summer. This sale is a fantastic opportunity to purchase a wide selection of xeric plants from OXA and Wild Bloom and Xen Nurseries.

Additionally, master gardeners will be on hand to answer all of your garden-related questions.

With the unprecedented drought province-wide this year there is no better time to transition to xeriscape beds in your own garden. In previous columns I have discussed the interesting physiological adaptations plants have taken on to survive drought and while these adaptations are fascinating, so too is the stunning sustainable aesthetic which is xeriscape.

At our sale we will offer plants encompassing a diverse colour palette from hot reds and yellow shades to cool blues, purples and greens.

One of the plants I am excited to offer this year is *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*, known commonly as leadwort or plumbago.

Native to Western China, *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides* spreads by rhizomes to form an attractive groundcover featuring late-season, Gentian-blue flowers held above shiny green foliage.

As the fall temperatures drop, the foliage of leadwort transitions to a bronzy-red which is in stunning contrast to the deep blue blooms.

Also putting on a spectacular fall display are the various Agastaches. We will have three cultivars available for purchase: Little Adder, Coronado Red, and Double Bubble Mint. Agastache makes a great addition to the late season garden and all are favoured by a wide-variety of pollinators, but seldom bothered by deer.

Little Adder, featuring blue-purple blooms, has been propagated from our West Kelowna xeriscape demonstration garden where it continues to thrive even without irrigation in the face of stage 3 watering restrictions enacted Aug. 23 to protect the available water supply needed to fight the MacDougall Creek Wildfire.

Coronado Red and Double Bubble Mint feature warm shades of orange and magenta respectively.

These compact, long-flowering hybrids bloom earlier and longer than the traditional species of Agastache, with showy flowers sure to attract hummingbirds to your outdoor space.

For those of you looking for pure sunshine yellow, look no further than the new perennial *Gazania*. That's right, long considered an annual in Northern gardens, the new *Colorado Gold Gazania linearis* is perennial in zones 4a-8, and so reliably hardy in the Okanagan Valley. This *Gazania linearis* features daisy-like, golden yellow flowers which begin blooming in the spring and continue throughout the growing season.

No fall garden would be considered complete without including a sedum or two and we will have both tall and prostrate varieties including Angelina, Blue Spruce, Dark Magic, and Dazzleberry. Dazzleberry is a new cultivar from the Sunsparkler series which features smokey-blue foliage absolutely covered in raspberry blooms.

These tough beauties are not particular about soil quality and extend the bloom period late into the fall, many looking fantastic with a covering of snow on their umbral flowers.

All of the above-mentioned plants will benefit from being planted this fall when the ambient air temperature has begun to cool, yet the soil is still warm to encourage good root establishment prior to going into dormancy for the winter.

There is still time to head to makewaterwork.ca and take the pledge to conserve water and in doing so become eligible to win one of two \$500 gift certificates.

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is extremely grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board and is proud to be collaborating with them on their Make Water Work campaign.

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