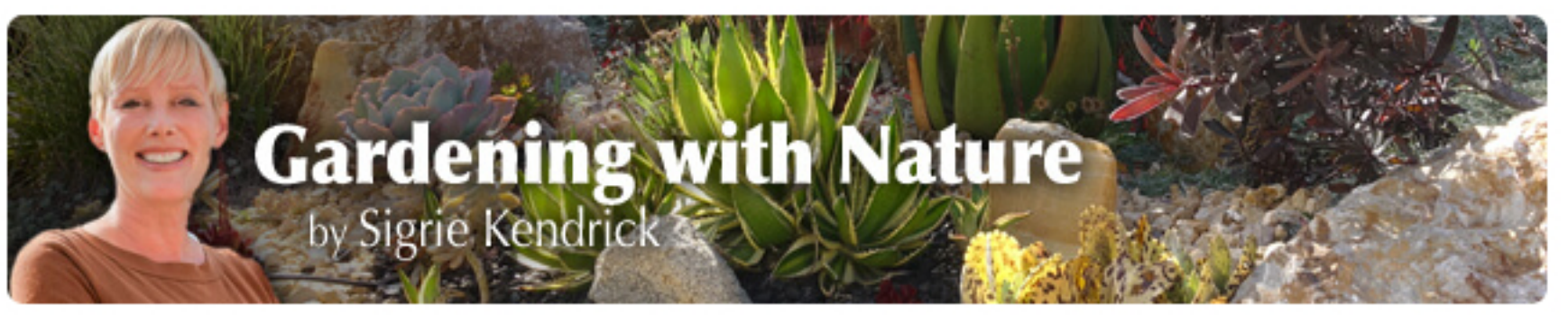


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OXA'S PLANT SALE SUCCESS

Fundraising sale shows drought-resistant plants are growing in popularity

Sigrie Kendrick - Sep 27, 2023 / 11:00 am



Photo: Judie Steeves
At Saturday's very successful fall plant sale, Okanagan Xeriscape Association executive-director Sigrie Kendrick (left) congratulates Lockie Bracken, winner of a two-hour Dig with Sig consultation this Friday.

I guess it takes drought conditions to convince people that putting in drought-tolerant perennials just makes sense in this climate.

It certainly was clear at the Okanagan Xeriscape Association's second fall plant sale last Saturday that more and more people are interested in transforming their gardens to beautiful choices that use less water and stay healthy even under extremely hot and dry conditions, such as we suffered this year.

The sale began at 10 a.m. with OXA members provided early access at 9:15 a.m., yet a line of eager shoppers began to form prior to 9 a.m., even before we unloaded all the plants off our trucks.

We weren't sure how successful our message about the sense of planting perennials in the cooler fall months had been, but it would seem more and more people agree that fall planting of perennials gives them more time to get established before the heat of summer hits.

Traditionally gardeners have run around like crazy people in the spring, planting and lugging hoses and watering cans in an effort to keep young, not-yet-established plants alive in the face of scorching temperatures.

By their very nature, annuals and many of our food crops must be planted in the spring, but trees, shrubs, perennials and vines all benefit from being planted in the 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.

From the moment the sale began until the last purchase was made I was absolutely inundated with questions about xeriscape from hundreds of people representing a wide cross-section of the public.

Tears were shed as I spoke to a couple who had lost their mature and much-loved landscape to the MacDougall Creek Wildfire and were facing the herculean task of rebuilding. Needless to say they had a new appreciation for xeriscape and were not replacing their lost cedar hedge.

There were members from countless condominiums who had attended the sale to educate themselves on the benefits of xeriscape after complaints from neighbours about rising water bills.

It's often a challenge if you are one of the few forward-thinking individuals trying to guide the conservative majority towards more sustainable choices such as encouraging alternatives to water-thirsty cedar hedges and turf grass.

I spoke with first-time homeowners, many of whom were new to the Okanagan and were frustrated with their early gardening failures as they attempted to negotiate the challenges of our semi-arid environment. And then there were the children, whose early enthusiasm for plants and gardening rubbed off on their frazzled parents as I showed them how easy it is to propagate sedums.

Having being involved with the organization since 2015, it is heart-warming to see more and more of you embracing the sustainability that is xeriscape. Thank you.

A huge thanks also to all of the volunteers who make this organization possible, showing up to propagate, nurture, and then carry plants to be sold at our fund-raising events.

And, congratulations to Lockie Bracken, the winner of our Dig with Sig contest for members. He won two hours of consultation and gardening labour in his own garden this Friday.

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Note that the www.makewaterwork.ca contest to pledge to conserve water ends Sept. 29, so there is still time to pledge for the chance to win one of two \$500 gift certificates. Pledging takes all of 30 seconds so it's a no-brainer. Do it.

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is 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.

Sigrie Kendrick is a master gardener and executive-director of the non-profit 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.