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Xeriscaping is Cool!

More and more, we are all looking for ways to conserve resources. Using less water is something that is becoming an increasingly important issue the world over. As gardeners, there are easy ways we can use less water and still have lush gardens.

- 1) **Mulch.** By using a 3-inch layer of mulch on your gardens, you greatly reduce the need for watering. Mulch has the added benefits of keeping down weeds (less work!) and as it breaks down, it improves soil quality (plants grow better!).
- 2) **Compost.** Put kitchen and garden waste in a pile and make a great, free soil amendment, while also reducing waste going to landfill.
- 3) **Soaker Hoses.** Placing soaker hoses under mulch makes water go right to the roots instead of spraying the surface where the moisture is likely to be lost to evaporation.
- 4) **Rain barrels.** Reclaims water that runs off the roof during rainstorms and reusing it.
- 5) **Plant selection.** Lots of plants are drought tolerant once established. Perennials and shrubs like armeria, butterfly weed, butterfly bush, yarrow, Artemisia, asters, blue mist shrub, purple coneflower, barrenwort, euphorbia, daylilies, daisies, Russian sage, gaura, black-eyed Susan, golden rod, thyme, mullein, switch grass, and feather reed grass are all good choices. Another tip is to choose plants with silver, wooly, or succulent foliage- these all fare better in periods of heat or drought.
- 6) **Reduce the area given to lawn.** Lawn grass, by nature, needs a lot more maintenance than a mulched bed of drought tolerant flowers. Large areas of lawn have the added problem of needing too much fertilizer and pesticides, which run off into water supplies. Lawns typically require a lot of water in hot dry weather, because they are better suited to a milder, damper climate like England, not here. Use of plants like clover mixed in with drought tolerant grass is the best bet for those who can't give up the green lawn dream.

Use Soil moist in containers to help them retain more water.