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### *Xeriscaping*

Have you ever noticed a sprinkler system around buildings or home lawns? Was it watering the street instead of the grass and plants they are installed to irrigate? Did you know that 36% of total water usage in the United States is used for lawns? In Oklahoma clean water for daily human life is a must, why then do we let thousands of gallons of our most precious resource run into the drainage system?

Take a drive through a residential section of a city, town or even rural Oklahoma. Notice how many homes have beautiful landscaping? How many of those plants are native to the particular region of Oklahoma where they are planted? How many lush green lawns are there? When I see these things, I see an area of water conservation that needs to be addressed.

Homeowners could conserve water in Oklahoma by using native and drought tolerant plant varieties in landscapes and focus on better positioning and management of sprinkler systems. Drought tolerant plants depend on less water which would reduce the amount of water needed for lawn care. Trees and shrubs native to the specific regions of Oklahoma could be planted rather than more exotic varieties. These native plants would be acclimated to the region and its weather pattern, and should require less intense management and possibly moisture. Homeowners could go with a minimal amount of landscaping instead of trying to fill every corner of the yard with lush growing plants; this approach would reduce the amount of water used. The addition of mulch in plant beds would help hold moisture in and around the area so water would not have to be added every day. Soil preparation prior to planting could help soils retain moisture; increasing the amount of organic matter in soil will increase the soils' ability to hold water.

The methods mentioned above are included in the practice of Xeriscaping, defined as a water-conscience approach to landscaping. Irrigation equipment should be water efficient and checked for good working order and calibration. Check spray patterns to make sure water is benefiting the plants and not an area, like the street, that does not need water. Timing of irrigation is also a factor; water during cooler times of the day to prevent loss from evaporation.

Homeowners, businesses and landscape companies in Oklahoma should be educated about these issues. As a teenage boy I'm not that big a fan of a lush green lawn it just means I have to mow more often but, I understand people who want their home and business to look nice. Decreasing the amount of water wasted in the area of landscape care could help Oklahoma conserve water for use in our next 100 years.