

Colorado Xeriscape Quick-Map & Weekend-to-Weekend Action Plan (PDF)

Xeriscape Quick-Map Checklist & Weekend-to-Weekend Plan Northern Colorado – USDA Zones-4b-6a

Ready to transform your yard into a water-wise oasis without a massive overhaul? Our free “Xeriscape Quick-Map & Weekend-to-Weekend Plan” download gives you a clear, printable guide that matches the right drought-tolerant plants to each sun, wind, and slope condition in Northern Colorado, plus a step-by-step timeline that lets you make steady progress from a single turf slice to a fully shaded, low-maintenance landscape. Grab it now and start saving water—one weekend at a time!

SITE CONDITION	PLANT TYPE(S) – WHY THEY WORK	SUGGESTED SPECIES (ZONE 4-5/6)	PLANTING & CARE TIP
Morning-sun spots (gentle light, 3–5 h, partial shade)	Shade-tolerant perennials and low-water shrubs that keep colour early in the season.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coral Bells (<i>Heuchera</i> spp.) – colorful foliage, tolerates light shade. • Fernbush (<i>Chamaebatiaria millefolium</i>) – evergreen-looking, very drought-tolerant. • Catmint (<i>Nepeta</i> spp.) – blue flowers, hardy in dappled light. 	Add 2–3 in of organic mulch to retain moisture and keep roots cool. Plant in well-drained soil; no irrigation needed after the first establishment year.
Hot south-facing edges (full sun, very dry)	Drought-tough perennials, ornamental grasses and succulents that thrive in heat and poor soils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agave (<i>Agave</i> spp., e.g., <i>A. parryi</i>) – rosette form, almost no water after establishment. • Apache Plume (<i>Fallugia paradoxa</i>) – white-pink “feathers,” excellent heat tolerance. • Blue Avena Grass (<i>Helictotrichon sempervirens</i>) – blue-gray foliage, low water demand. • Yarrow (<i>Achillea</i> spp.) – deep roots, long-lasting flowers. 	Use a drip line set to “deep-soak, infrequent” (once every 2–3 weeks). Top-dress with coarse gravel mulch to reduce surface heating.
Windy corners (high evaporation, occasional wind-scouring)	Tough, wind-resistant shrubs and grasses that hold soil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panchito Manzanita (<i>Arctostaphylos x coloradoensis ‘Panchito’</i>) – low, evergreen, wind-firm. • Mexican Feather Grass (<i>Nassella tenuissima</i>) – fine, flexible foliage that bends with wind. • Prairie Winecups (<i>Callirhoe involucrata</i>) – low mound, deep roots, native. 	Plant in a windbreak or staggered with a low fence. Mulch heavily (3 in) and water deeply once at planting, then let dry out.
Low spots (water collects)	Plants that tolerate occasional moisture but still need low overall water use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prairie Coneflower (<i>Ratibida</i> spp.) – tolerates damp soil, dries out quickly. • Coral Bells (again – foliage stays attractive when soil is moist). • Blue Avena Grass (spreads to absorb excess water). 	Keep the bed lightly mulched to prevent standing water for more than a few days. After the first season, reduce irrigation to match the drier surrounding zones.
Slopes (runoff steals moisture)	Deep-rooted perennials and grasses that slow runoff and hold soil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yucca (<i>Yucca</i> spp.) – stiff roots, excellent on slopes. • Agastache (<i>Agastache</i> spp.) – aromatic, attracts pollinators, tolerates well-drained sites. • Mexican Feather Grass (again – fine root mat). 	Install a short, permeable edging (stone or log) to create a “bench” that catches water. Add a 2-in layer of coarse mulch, then plant.



Weekend-to-Weekend Implementation Plan

TIMEFRAME	ACTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Week 1 – Quick audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure existing turf area. • Locate and fix any irrigation leaks. • Run sprinklers for ~5 min and note overspray or puddling. 	Establishes a baseline, prevents waste, and shows where water is already escaping.
Weeks 2-4 – Remove a slice of turf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose the least-used turf (side yards, a narrow strip, or a steep slope). • Clear the sod and loosen the soil. • Build one new xeriscape bed and fill it with native-adapted soil amendment. • Mulch heavily (3 in). 	Small, visible wins build momentum and instantly reduce water demand.
Month 2 – Upgrade irrigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install drip tubing to the new bed (with a pressure regulator). • Program the controller for deep, infrequent cycles (e.g., 15 min every 10 days). • After watering, let the soil surface dry before the next cycle. 	Drip delivers water directly to roots, cuts evaporation, and teaches plants to develop deeper roots.
Later in the season – Add long-term shade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant a moderate-size, drought-tolerant tree (e.g., Ponderosa pine <i>Pinus ponderosa</i> or Western juniper <i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>). • As the canopy spreads, expand surrounding beds outward, using the same plant groups from the table. 	Shade cools soil, reduces evaporation, and over time lowers water needs for nearby beds.
Ongoing – Establishment watering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the first growing season, water new plants 2-3 times per week (just enough to keep the root zone moist). • Beginning in July, taper watering by ~20 % each week until the plants are fully rooted. 	Encourages deep rooting; after the first season the plants can survive on natural precipitation and occasional drip.

Thank you for taking the time to explore this guide. We hope it inspires the first steps toward a more water-wise landscape. When you're curious about the kinds of projects we've helped bring to life, feel free to visit our website and see the work we've done for fellow Colorado homeowners. Happy planting!

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