

Xeriscape Standards for Oak Bluff Estates (Phase 2) HOA

Approved by the Board July 14, 2014

To be filed by resolution at the Williamson County (Texas) Courthouse

Xeriscaping means using native and adaptive plants that can grow and sustain themselves in dry natural conditions. Xeriscapes should need little to no water other than what is naturally occurring and tolerate heat and drought conditions. Since the passage of TX SB198 in June 2013, HOAs must not unreasonably restrict homeowners who desire a landscape that saves water. Under this new law, the following xeriscape standards set guidelines for homeowners who decide to xeriscape in Oak Bluff Estates Phase 2 (OBE II).

The advantages of xeriscaping include

- Substantial cost savings on water bills
- Conservation of diminishing water resources
- Prevention of pollution from environmentally harmful run-off
- Pride in knowing that you are protecting our fragile environment and limited resources
- Aesthetic beauty and increased homeowner options for plant material

All homeowners who are xeriscaping all or part of their front lawns are required to submit a landscape design plan to the Property Management Company for initial review. ACC (Architecture Control Committee) forms are available on the Oak Bluff Estates website, www.oakbluffestates.com.

1) Live Turf/Ground Cover area: OBE II allows variances to the current DCCRs which assume a green front lawn with full water sprinkling. Under the xeriscaping guidelines, approximately 25% of the visible lawn area should contain a turf grass, waterwise live green ground cover, or both. It is preferred to choose a turf grass that has minimal water requirements. Choose turf or ground cover that will survive in the amount of sun or shade it is situated in.

2) Nonliving Ground Cover: Areas can contain decomposed granite, ground hardwood mulch, crushed limestone, flagstone, loose stone material, or other appropriate ornamental material for a ground cover that is maintained to prevent weed growth without using toxic or environmentally harmful chemicals. Large areas may not be composed of a single nonliving material, i.e. bare mulch/rock is not allowed unless interspersed with plants. Concrete surfaces should be limited to driveways and sidewalks only. Additionally, loose rock in the front lawn must not wash out onto the public sidewalk or street. This may be prevented by ensuring that the rock level is lower than the curb or sidewalk.

3) Plant Bed Borders: Areas must be bordered to define the xeriphytic planting beds clearly from turf or live groundcover areas.

4) Sidewalk Strip: If there are areas in Oak Bluff that has a sidewalk strip, homeowners should consider converting these areas from turf grasses to xeriphytic materials and plants since these areas are difficult to water without street runoff. This area may be composed of 100% rock or mulch to be consistent with materials in the yard.

5) Maintenance: Turf grass must be regularly mowed and edged. Xeriscaped areas must be maintained (plants kept trimmed, weeded, and borders edged) to ensure an attractive appearance. Perennials that go dormant in the winter should be cut back during the winter to look neat. No plants may encroach on public sidewalks. Sickly and dying plants must be removed or replaced. This can be prevented by using plants adapted to the pH soil conditions created by the non-turf materials used. For example, don't use acid-loving plants along with crushed limestone covering, whereas acid-loving plants would thrive with a ground hardwood mulch.

6) Decorative Objects: Hardscapes can include large boulders or other natural materials that are used as a part of the xeriphytic landscape design, as long as they are effectively combined with a live landscape. The Architectural Review Committee prefers to see natural colored rock and masonry or masonry that matches the existing house color. Water features, urns, and other man-made ornamentation can add variety and color but should not exceed 4 items larger than 1 cubic foot in public view. No boulders or large rocks exceeding 12" in height may be used in the sidewalk strip area if such area exists..

7) Safety: For public safety, no plant with thorns, spines, or sharp edges can be used within 6' of the public sidewalk. In addition, plants with leaves or berries toxic to children should be avoided.

8) Irrigation: Xeriscaped areas should have a drip irrigation system but not an active built-in irrigation system, unless it is a system that has been adapted to a drip system. A built-in irrigation system that is not adapted to drip defeats the purpose of xeriscaping, and is unlikely to achieve water conservation.