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Xeriscape Outreach

Learning about xeriscaping and water conservation is important. But just as important is teaching others about New Mexico's most precious resource — and what we must do to preserve it for future generations.

Key Concepts

Community attitudes, political activism, representative government.

Teacher's Notes



Students have the potential to make changes in their communities by sharing the information they have learned in this curriculum. Getting them involved in a community project will not only reinforce what they have learned, but it will also teach them about becoming good citizens. The **Community**

Outreach chapter contains three activities for community involvement, along with a list of other suggestions. (Please let us know if there is a creative idea for community involvement that can be shared with other teachers.)

The three activities that are included in this chapter encourage students to view themselves in relation to the greater community. In the process of investigating xeriscape principles, students will also start looking around their communities to see where improvements can be made. As they become more informed about water issues in this state and in the world, let us encourage them to become more active in their local communities.

Teacher's Notes, continued

Notes on the Activities

A Community of Xeriscapers – This activity asks the students to reflect on what they have learned and how their attitudes toward xeriscaping may have changed. The students develop a survey instrument and interview friends and neighbors about their knowledge and attitudes regarding xeriscaping. It is possible that students might wish to present their findings to the local paper or to community leaders as a benchmark of where the community stands on xeriscaping.

News from Xeriscape HQ – Students will develop a newsletter about xeriscaping to educate peers, family, and neighbors. They will research topics, review other newsletters for style and formatting ideas, and complete articles and graphics. The newsletter can be distributed to classmates or outside the school community.

As A Citizen, I Feel... – Students will learn about community voice by participating in a letter-writing campaign. The students take a critical look around them and see what needs to be changed in regard to local water issues. They will have to decide what political representative, company, or government agency is involved with their issue and what that group has in their power to do about the issue. Students then write a letter to the chosen figure or entity expressing their own views and suggestions. This activity is meant to stimulate students to become better writers and more active citizens.

Possible Extensions Into the Local Community:

It is impossible to present a complete list of community extensions. The possibilities listed below are simply a starting point:

- Analyze and review the water-use practices of the school or school district and make recommendations for conservation practices.
- Suggest changes that could be made in landscaping at the school that would be both attractive and encourage low-water use.
- Form community service teams that volunteer to provide the labor to change water-thirsty landscapes to water-thrifty landscapes.
- Publish articles on xeric principles in the local paper.
- Create brochures for younger children to educate them on water conservation.
- Create public service announcements on the value of xeric practices for local radio and television stations.
- Develop a skit to be performed for the younger grades, at an open house, or at local events.

Encourage the students to find ways to reach out into their community and become active citizens!



A Community of Xeriscapers

Main Question:

What are your communities' views about xeriscaping?

Objectives:

- To survey community knowledge of xeriscape principles
- To survey community attitudes toward xeric landscapes

Subjects:

language arts, social studies

Time:

1 hour in class to prepare; 1 hour to present; balance can be done at home

Advance Preparation:

- Obtain copies of existing surveys, which can be on any topic. Have students critique what they like and don't like. Use this information to establish guidelines for the class survey.



Setting the Stage:

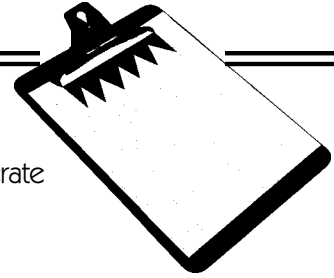
- Ask students what their concepts and attitudes toward xeriscape were before beginning this unit.
- How well informed do they think the community is about xeriscape principles?

Materials: for each student

- 4 paper
- 4 pencil
- 4 tape recorder (optional)
- 4 camera (optional)



A Community of Xeriscapers

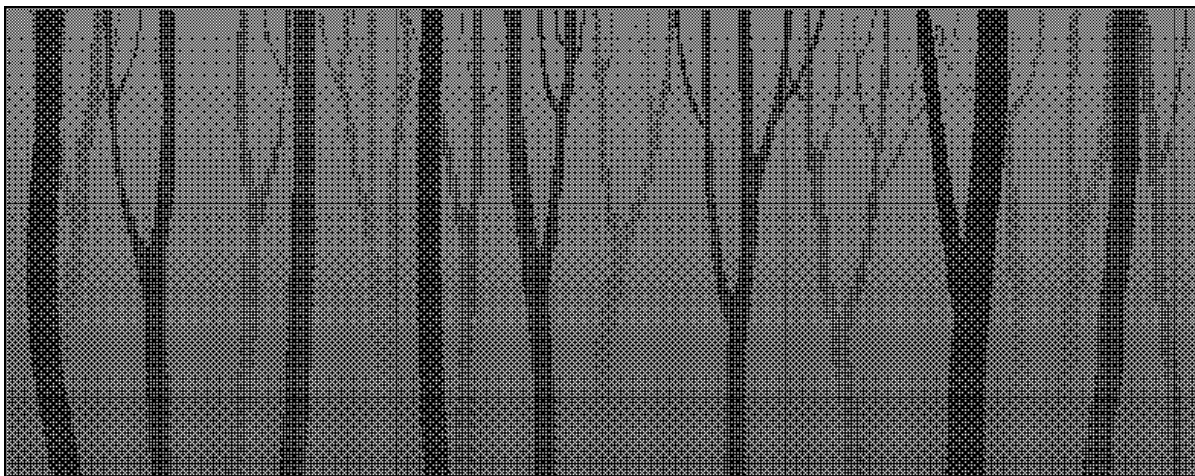


Survey Procedures

1. Divide students into groups of two to four students and have them generate a list of questions about xeriscaping, such as:
 - How would you define xeriscape?
 - What is the difference between xeriscape and “zeroscape”?
 - Do you think there is a need to conserve water in New Mexico?
 - What percentage of residential water use do you think is devoted to landscaping?
 - What kind of landscape do you have at your house?
 - What kind of incentives would encourage you to switch to xeriscaping?
 - Should the city or state require that all new landscapes use low-water-use plants?
 - What suggestions do you have for decreasing landscape water use?
2. As a class, review the questions generated and develop one survey form for everyone to use.
3. Have each student interview one family member and one neighbor. Interviews could also be tape-recorded and pictures of interviewees’ gardens could be taken.
4. Summarize the results of the interviews and present them to the class.

Extension:

- Find out about xeriscaping activities in other states, such as Colorado and California.
- What laws relating to xeriscaping are being proposed in New Mexico?



News from Xeriscape HQ



Main Question:

How can you get the word out about xeriscaping?

Objectives:

- To write and publish a community newsletter about xeriscape issues

Subjects:

science, language arts, art

Time: varies

Vocabulary:

deadline, formatting, clipart, draft

Advance Preparation:

- This is a good activity to follow A Community of Xeriscapers. Students can use information collected in their surveys as the basis for articles in the newsletter.
- Schedule time in the library or computer lab for research.
- Obtain copies of community newsletters for students to analyze.

Setting the Stage:

- Distribute copies of community newsletters to groups of students and have them analyze them, writing what they like about them, what they dislike, what they think are effective ways of presenting material, etc.
- As a class, decide what the goal of the newsletter will be and what topics will be covered. Generate a list of who will be responsible for each topic/article.

Materials:

- 4 magazines
- 4 tape recorders (optional)
- 4 Internet
- 4 scanner (optional)
- 4 computers
- 4 art supplies
- 4 camera (optional)
- 4 printer



News From Xeriscape HQ

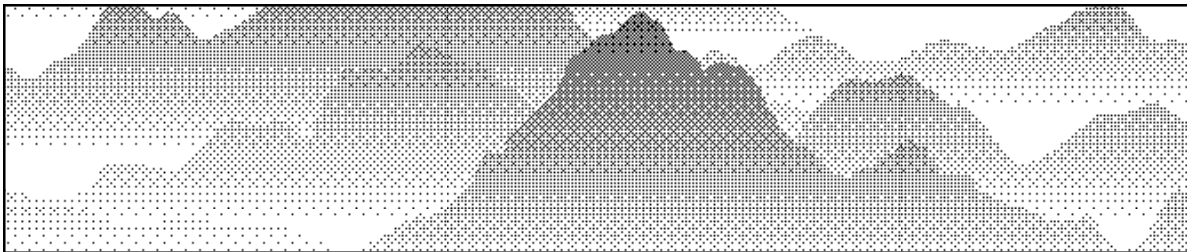


Building A Newsletter

1. Research topics to be covered in the newsletter. Students may work as individuals or in groups. In addition to library and Internet research, students may want to interview people involved in xeriscape activities or local officials.
2. Write stories/articles/poems, etc. to be used. Students should share their work with each other in a “studio” atmosphere to encourage creativity. Use a variety of ways to present information, including:
 - hypothetical letters from readers (often humorous);
 - cartoon strip;
 - xeriscape contest;
 - biography of an important person;
 - hypothetical or real movie review of a gardening video;
 - travel article about a local garden, zoo, etc.;
 - cooking section about edible native plants;
 - art section describing native plant dyes and weaving; and,
 - advertisements from xeriscape suppliers or landscapers.
3. Be creative!!!
4. Design artwork to accompany the text. Scan in the photos or pictures made by students.
5. Design and create the layout for the newsletter. This is easier if the design and layout is handled by one group, with input from everyone.
6. Produce and distribute the newsletter (use colored paper).

Extension:

- Bring in current events to be discussed in the newsletter.
- Present parts of the newsletter as news reports during school morning announcements.



As A Citizen, I Feel...



Main Question:

How can you influence landscaping practices at a governmental level?

Objectives:

- To identify a xeriscape-related problem in the area
- To compose a letter to government officials to express concern

Subjects:

science, language arts, social studies

Time: 1 hour

Advance Preparation:

- Obtain sample letters that have been written to government agencies regarding environmental issues.
- Determine to which government officials letters should be sent, and get the mailing addresses of these government officials.

Setting the Stage:

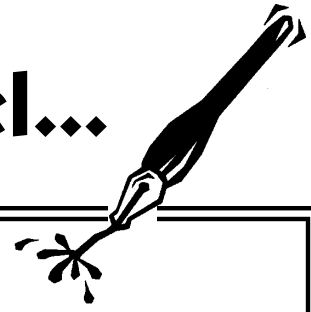
- Ask students to identify water-related problems that they see around them. This can include such things as golf courses, lawns on median strips, wasteful sprinklers, large strips of gravel, etc.
- Discuss letter format with students.

Materials:

- 4 paper
- 4 pen or pencil
- 4 envelope
- 4 stamp



As A Citizen, I Feel...

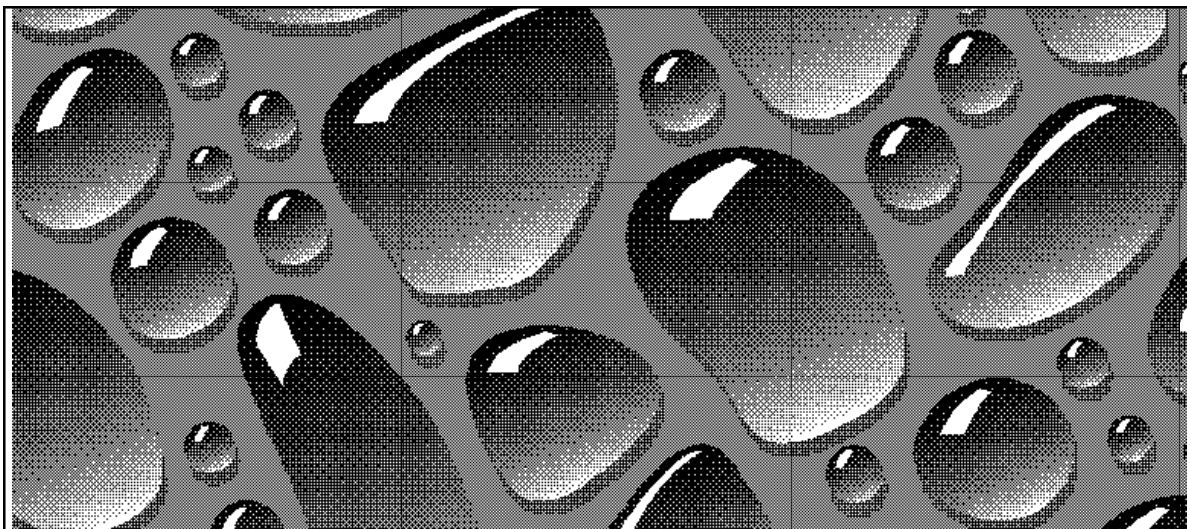


Writing to Politicians

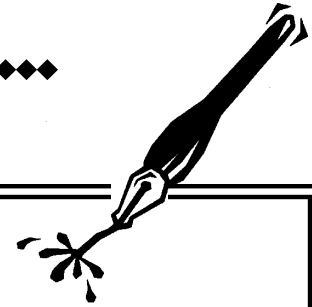
1. Have each student select an issue that he/she is concerned about and write a letter expressing his/her viewpoint.
2. Encourage students to read their letters aloud to the class. Ask the other students for constructive comments about the letters. The following questions can help stimulate a discussion:
 - What was the primary topic of the letter?
 - Does the letter clearly state the writer's position on the issue?
 - Does the letter ask for a specific action?
 - What is the most compelling argument presented in this letter?
 - Is the letter emotional or rational?
 - How would you react if you received this letter?

Extension:

- Attend community meetings and learn about environmental issues.
- After responses to the letters have been received, share these responses with the class.
- Write a follow-up letter that requests a specific action (i.e., the introduction of a water conservation bill, the adoption of water conservation programs, creation of a local xeriscape demonstration garden, etc.)



As A Citizen, I Feel... Letter Format



Date

Your name
Your address
City, State, Zip Code

Official's name
Department
Street address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Sir or Madam: (use official's name and title if you have it)

(Your letter.)

- 4 Skip a line between each paragraph.
- 4 In the first paragraph, describe the situation you are concerned about and why.
- 4 In the second paragraph, suggest what you would like to see done to remedy the situation.
- 4 In the third short paragraph, thank the official for his/her attention to the matter.

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

Your printed or typed name

RESOURCES:

Greening School Grounds: Creating Habitats for Learning, published by Green Teacher, is a guide for teachers on how to implement a school garden project. It covers everything from convincing the administration, securing resources, and implementing the garden — and even includes suggested activities and advice on how to prevent vandalism. This book is a must for any teacher starting at the beginning and implementing a school garden project.

<http://www.kidsgardening.com> is sponsored by the National Gardening Association (NGA). The organization's commitment is to support educators and parents who garden with kids, whether as family projects or as educational tools. The NGA provides horticultural expertise, quality resources, meaningful networking opportunities, and ideas for sparking inquisitiveness and exploration. Their resources can help in the following ways:

- cultivate kids' interest in living things
- inspire learning about important life science concepts
- build youngsters' confidence as investigators and problem solvers
- promote teamwork and collaborative learning experiences that enrich environmental awareness and responsibility.

The National Gardening Association also participates in the following programs. Each of these programs is linked to the www.kidsgardening.com site.

- Garden in Every School
- Youth Garden Grant Program
- Healthy Sprouts Awards
- Kids Growing with Dutch Bulb Awards Program
- Scott's Give Back to Grow Awards
- NGA Partners Network
- International Project – Making Connections through Gardening
- Green.Gov

<http://www.westgoldeditorial.com> – a private-for-profit company that helps publishers and editors invent and perfect their projects, in print and on the Web. The site includes useful information and a question set to help anyone starting a newsletter get focused.

<http://www.state.nm.us/category/governmentnm.html> – lists all of the state government officials including phone numbers and addresses

<http://www.house.gov> – the official website of the U.S. House of Representatives. Click on the Write Your Representative link, then type in your state and zip code to get the contact information about your congressperson.

<http://www.senate.gov> – the official website of the U.S. Senate. Type in your state to get the names, mailing addresses, email addresses, and office phone numbers of your senators.