

**HIGH COUNTRY WEST PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION**  
**ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES AND POLICY – LOW WATER-USING PLANTS**

**I. PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The High Country West Architectural Committee (HCWAC) has formulated the following guidelines to assist any homeowners who wish to adopt water conservation-friendly landscaping methods, including Xeriscape. The HCWAC intends to use these supplemental guidelines to review and manage landscaping plans that incorporate xeriscape areas.

**II. ABOUT XERISCAPING**

A xeriscape landscape requires a minimum amount of water and maintenance, but not zero water and maintenance. Xeriscaping means using native and adapted plants which grow and sustain themselves with low water requirements and that can tolerate heat and drought conditions. This policy and guidelines conform to California Civil Code 4735 (As amended on September 18, 2014, Operative on January 1, 2015.)

Many of the Xeriscape Guidelines covered in this policy are consistent with our Architectural Guidelines, so these will be considered a “variance” to the existing guidelines and not a replacement of them.

**III. SUPPLEMENTAL LANDSCAPING GUIDELINES**

In the past, High Country West has always promoted a full and green turf area to cover the vast majority of the homeowner’s yard, but under current drought conditions, and government-enforced watering restrictions and conservation mandate, this will not be sustainable for many homeowners. When they are ready to replace their existing landscaping, they have two (2) options:

**Option 1:** Replace existing water dependent landscaping in part or in whole with drought tolerant grass, artificial turf, and/or “Xeriscaping”. This option requires that a drought tolerant landscaping plan be approved by the Architectural Committee before work begins.

**Option 2:** Temporarily minimize watering of all existing vegetation allowing it to dry out (as suggested by some water authorities) while government mandated water conservation restrictions are in effect. This option also requires that a drought tolerant landscaping plan be approved by the Architectural Committee before action is taken. A dried out landscape must be kept free of weeds and all dead vegetation, excluding grass. The yard must be clean and not deemed unsightly, a fire hazard or an eyesore. When the water restriction is lifted the homeowner must reseed or revive the turf to its original state. All dead ground cover, shrubs, trees, etc. must be replaced. The Architectural Committee will work with the homeowner to determine a schedule for the restoration of the landscaping based upon growing season and/or other practical limitations. Any changes to restoration of the previous landscaping shall result in the property owner having to submit new plans. Should the Lot change ownership while this option is in effect all restrictions and limitations as defined on the approved application will be assumed by the new homeowner of record.

All requests for any exterior change must be submitted using the “Application for Approval of Exterior Improvements” form, which can be obtained from the Club Office or found on the website <http://www.HighCountryWest.com>. As part of the approval process the Architectural Committee will take into consideration all State and Local water conservation restrictions as they apply at the time of request [Subdivision (c) of Section 65595 of the Government Code, Sections 353 and 375 of the Water Code along with any Emergency Conservation Regulations]. Should prevailing water

conservation restrictions adequately support Xeriscape or other drought tolerant landscaping, “Option 2” may not be approved. However, Xeriscaping will always remain an option, even when water restrictions are removed.

The removal of pre-existing landscaping and replacement with a predominance of “Hardscape” is not an option. “Hardscape” is defined as non-plant material elements within a landscaped/xeriscape setting. Examples of “Hardscape” elements include, but are not limited to, driveways, walkways, pathways (not compacted soil pathways), stepping stones, bridges, stairways, steps. Materials for these elements often include wood, concrete, natural stone, decorative stone, pavers, plastic, and metal.

#### **IV. OPTION 1 - XERISCAPE AND DROUGHT TOLERANT GRASS AND/OR TURF LANDSCAPE PLANNING**

##### **1. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS AND EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENT APPLICATION**

The “Application for Approval of Exterior Improvements” form as submitted must include the following information:

- i. An overall written outline of your project. This description should draw special attention to any major changes that you plan to make (structural, drainage, etc.) and identify which existing plants (if any) and what turf area (if any) you plan to remove.
- ii. A drawing or photo(s) of your proposed landscaping plan including yard dimensions. Your plan drawing should include the following:
  - a. Details about the size and type of existing trees, shrubs and plants
  - b. Details about the size and type of new trees, shrubs and plants
  - c. Details about the “Grass/Sod/Artificial Turf” area that will remain or be reconfigured
  - d. Any structural elements already on site (retaining walls, large rocks, etc.)
  - e. Existing and proposed Hardscape
  - f. Proposed new structural elements such as retaining walls, large rocks/boulders, dry river beds, bridges, etc.
  - g. Any new or modified irrigation system(s)
  - h. Drainage plan

Note:

- A minimum of 50% (within 1 year) of the xeriscape area must be landscaped with “long-lived” live plantings (succulents, perennials, shrubs, trees) that are drought tolerant in the area.
- Samples of artificial turf, rock, and mulch must accompany the request if applicable.
- List new plant names and container sizes and indicate their proposed location.
- Minimum sizes needed:
  - ✓ Deciduous / Evergreen trees - minimum 24-inch container
  - ✓ Shrubs - minimum 5-gallon container
  - ✓ Succulents and Perennials - minimum 3-gallon container
  - ✓ Ground covers/vines - spaced to provide 80% ground coverage within 1 year

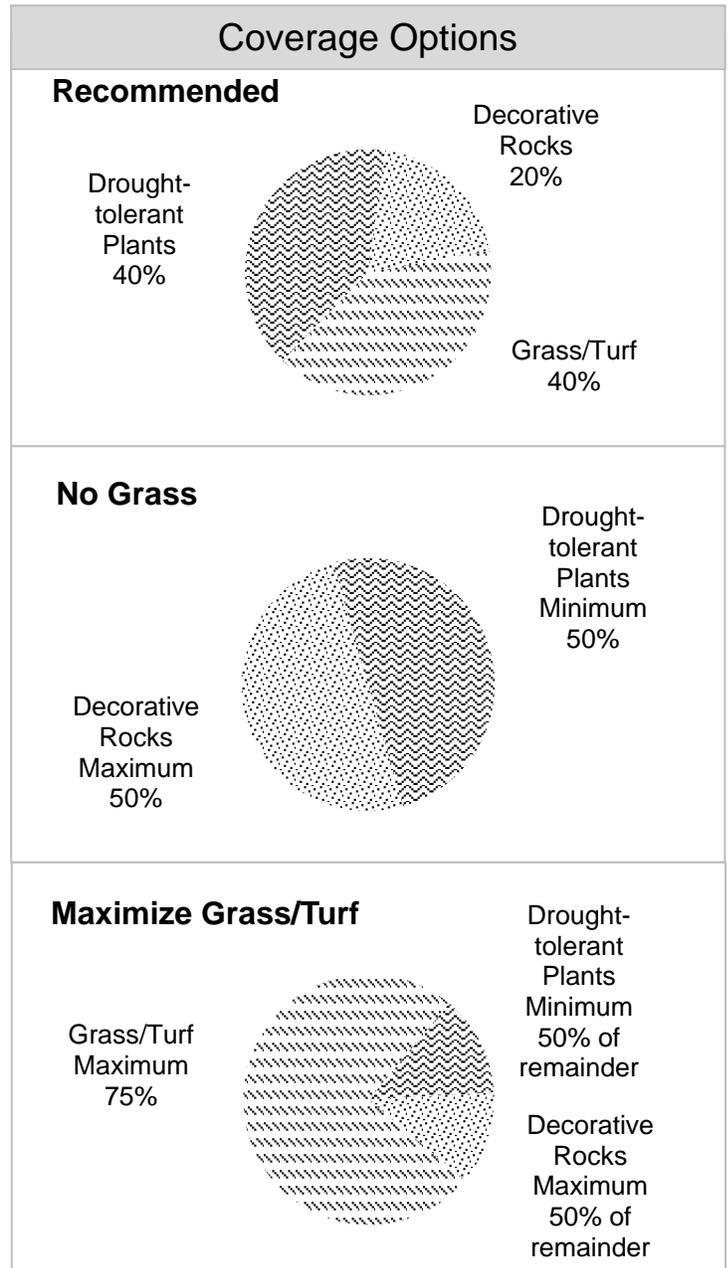
**V. SPECIFIC LANDSCAPING GUIDELINES**

**1. Drought Tolerant Grass and/or Sod or Artificial Turf Area**

Up to 75% of yard area can be drought tolerant grass, sod or artificial turf. Any remaining area must include planting area(s) and/or Xeriscaping. To reduce water usage the homeowner may choose to re-seed the lawn area with drought tolerant varieties of grass such as Zoysia, Bermuda, Buffalo Grass, Bahia, and Fescues. It is recommended that the homeowner consult with a professional to determine which grasses are likely to do best with their soil and sunlight conditions.

**2. Xeriscape Plants / Shrubs / Trees**

Your local plant nursery, or a landscaping professional, can assist you in making a determination of which plants to use in your design. Many nurseries provide a free booklet which has an extensive list of suggestions of drought tolerant, non-invasive, and wildlife friendly plants and trees. Avoid the use of any invasive plants and check to be certain that none of the plants you want are toxic to humans or animals. To research drought tolerant plants and bushes as well as low water consuming trees, check out the Architectural page at [www.highcountrywest.com](http://www.highcountrywest.com) for lists and resources. All plants have different light and soil requirements, so your first choices may not survive. Tall and excessively bushy plants (many shrubs and ornamental grasses) usually require pruning to keep them healthy. Spiky and thorny plants pose a risk to people and animals so they should not be planted near sidewalks, driveways, or easements (place at least six (6) feet away from these areas). No mature plant/shrub can exceed three (3) feet in height in front of the setback line of any Lot as shown on the recorded Final Subdivision Map of which the Lot is a part (Declaration of Restrictions, Article VI, Section 9 .The setback line is approximately fifteen (15) feet from the street for most Lots. Plants adjacent to a public sidewalk must not run or encroach into the walking path. Removed tree stumps must be pulled and backfilled with soil or ground down to below sod level so they do not pose a trip hazard or act as an eyesore.



### **3. Xeriscape Ground Covers / Pebbles / Pavers / Pathways**

Non-turf areas can contain a covering of decorative stone, pebbles of varying sizes, paver stones, flagstone, etc. Colors should complement the surroundings, be aesthetically pleasing and not be in contrast with adjacent properties. Materials to avoid are wood shavings, compost, colored glass mulch, nut shells and husks, rubber mulch, and anything that may be sharp or toxic to animals. Bark can only be placed around tree trunks and plants, for root protection and water retention. Bark depth must be 3 inches, with a maximum circumference of two (2) feet. Keep in mind that any large areas of ground cover material will affect drainage because there are no grass root systems to prevent erosion of the soil. Areas of exposed soil within a xeriscape design are not acceptable. Coverage may be difficult to measure, and may require site visit(s) to verify compliance

### **4. Borders / Edging**

Xeriscape areas must be surrounded by a border to clearly differentiate the Xeriscape areas from the Turf areas. A Xeriscape area entirely enclosed within a retaining wall or raised bed qualifies as sufficiently defined. You may use metal or plastic edging of high quality as long as it is properly staked in place, and set with the top edge not more than two (2) inches above grade. Edging should be monitored frequently to ensure that it is in good condition and replaced if it shows any signs of damage, breakage, rusting, or if sharp edges are exposed at any point.

Poured in place custom concrete borders are the edgings of choice. Concrete borders should be a minimum of four (4) inches in width. Precast edging material, pavers, stone, etc., are acceptable. Top edge shall be installed with not more than two (2) inches exposed above grade.

Redwood/cedar bender board, wood materials like pressure treated 2x4s, and railroad ties are not acceptable border materials, due to environmental concerns. The EPA has identified that they may contain Creosote which is a toxic compound that should not be used in a residential environment. Please read the EPA information below and contact us if you have any questions.

[http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/chemicals/creosote\\_prelim\\_risk\\_assess.htm](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/chemicals/creosote_prelim_risk_assess.htm)

<http://www2.epa.gov/region8/treated-wood/>

### **5. Weed Barriers / Landscaping Fabric**

An approved weed barrier is required under all approved inert ground cover. Any materials used to restrict weed growth in your Xeriscape must be hidden from view (covered by rock or other acceptable ground cover).

## **6. Structural Elements / Retaining Walls / Raised Beds / Large Rocks**

These elements can reflect a lot of creativity and bring a design vision together. Masonry products include stone, pavers, pre-cast decorative block, or concrete masonry units manufactured as edging and retaining wall shapes. Cinder blocks (also known as common concrete blocks) when used as a construction element must have a stucco finish applied. Individual stones can be “dry-fit” (do not need to be cemented together) as long as they do not exceed three (3) feet in height, and are positioned in a way as to maintain overall structural strength and stability. Any retaining walls or raised planter beds in excess of three (3) feet in height must conform to City of San Diego building codes. Architectural Committee will require a copy of the building permit and all associated City-stamped approved drawings before work may begin. Appropriate drainage must be included in any retaining wall design. The top of all walls or raised beds must be level. Large rocks/boulders should be used sparingly and positioned as focal points in your design, not the entire attraction. For example, a design involving twelve boulders in a bed of pea gravel is very unlikely to be approved. Avoid causing trip hazards and impeding visual sight lines.

## **7. Decorative Accents and Water Conservation Items**

Items such as urns, pots, bridges, birdbaths, statuary, and other man-made ornamentation must be approved in advance. Indicate the items on your landscape area drawing using pictures so that we may review the size, type, and color to ensure it meets with the standards of our community. Rain barrels may not be visible from the street.

## **VI. XERISCAPE MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

Xeriscape areas are subject to the same maintenance requirements as other landscaping and must be maintained at all times to ensure an attractive appearance. Plants must be trimmed, beds must be kept weed-free, and borders must be edged. No plants may encroach on public sidewalks. Sickly and dying plants must be removed and replaced. Perennials that die back during winter must be cut back to remove dead material. This includes most ornamental grasses and other flowering perennials that go dormant in winter. Any mulch placed around tree trunks and plants for root protection and water retention must be kept fresh and reapplied as needed.