



Keep up With the Joneses

The Jones family has moved into a house near your school. They think their yard is bland. What they would like is to have an interesting yard that saves water and doesn't require too much maintenance. In this activity, your class will play the role of landscape architects working with the Joneses. As a group, you analyze the site and come to the same conclusion: **Xeriscape!**

Xeriscape combines the Greek word *xeric* (meaning dry) with the word *landscape* to form a term for a planted area that doesn't need much water.

People can save water using principles of Xeriscape in their yards. Lawns and most flowers require much water to grow. Between 25 and 50 percent of the water people use goes toward their yard. Using principles of Xeriscape in a yard can help save water and keep a yard looking beautiful even during times of drought.

Learning goals

- To practice problem solving
- To learn about plants and basic landscape architecture
- To draw plants and landscapes

Subjects

- Fine Arts
- Science

Materials

- pencils and erasers
- colored pencils and pens

Give Shape to a Xeriscape™



Sunshine State Standards

Fine Arts/Visual Arts: Creation and Communication, VA.B.1.3; Applications to Life, VA.E.1.3.

Science: Processes to Life, SC.F.1.3; How Living Things Interact with Their Environment, SC.G.1.3; The Nature of Science, SC.H.1.3

Activity

Provide students with photocopies of pages numbered 1 through 7 of this activity. Have the students follow the directions on Page 1, which will instruct them on how to create a Xeriscape landscape. Let students use the teacher's copy to see the plants' colors. When the students are finished, let them share their landscape designs with the class, explaining their thinking behind their designs.

Extension

Bring in a houseplant to serve as a model for student drawings. Ask the students to draw the plant and capture the plant's character in their drawings.

Xeriscape: Saving Water with a Plant-Friendly Yard

1 Play the role of a landscape architect. Landscape architects design yards for homes and plantbeds for businesses. When creating a landscape design, a landscape architect must consider what the client wants and what the plants need based on factors such as climate, sun, water availability, etc. In this activity, the Jones family wants you to design a landscape for their home.

They have requested:

- To save water
- To do less maintenance
- To bring in some birds
- To grow more trees
- To keep some lawn area for barbecues and volleyball
- To keep from feeling closed in by too many trees and shrubs

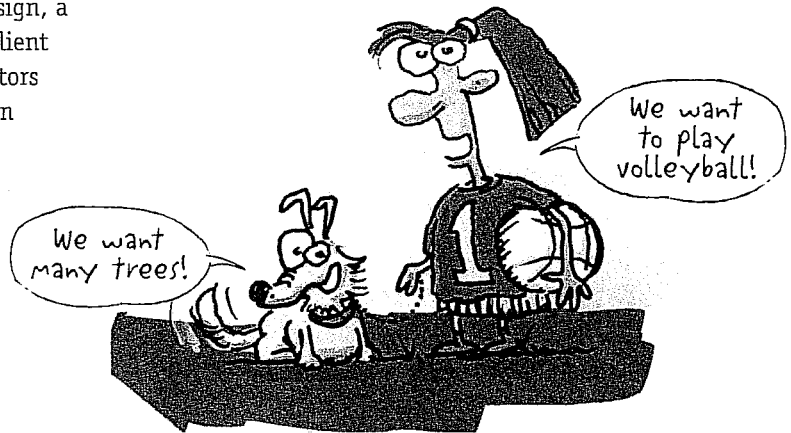
You have decided a Xeriscape landscape is the kind of design to give their home

2 First, become familiar with the seven guidelines to Xeriscape on Page 6. Trace the layout of the house and yard provided to you. Using the examples from the plant list, draw the plants onto the layout of the Joneses' home. To see the appropriate colors of the

plants, ask to see the teacher's manual or check out Florida plant books from the library.

- Consider factors such as sun and shade.
- Try grouping the plants that need the most water together so that it will be easy for the Joneses to water them.
- Keep in mind how tall each of the plants will grow and how much room the plants will take once they are established.
- A Xeriscape landscape is not only about plants. Pathways and play areas can also be covered with mulch or wood chips.

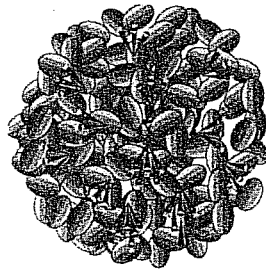
3 When you have completed your landscape design, the Jones family will want you to explain your ideas to them, so they can imagine what their yard will look like once it has been planted. Prepare to give the family a report.



Vine

Coral Honeysuckle
Lonicera sempervirens

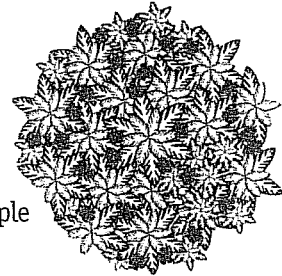
- sun to partial shade ○ — ◐
- drought tolerant
- red flowers



Flower/Ground Cover

Impatiens
Impatiens spp.

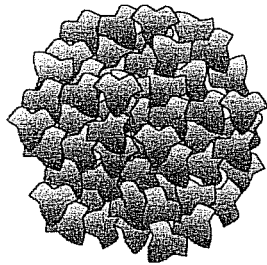
- to 1' tall
- partial shade to full shade ◐ — ●
- oasis
- white, red, pink, purple and orange flowers



Vine/Ground Cover

English Ivy
Hedera helix

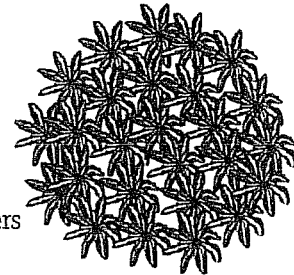
- partial shade to shade ◐ — ●
- drought tolerant



Flower/Ground Cover

Bromeliad
Vriesea spp.

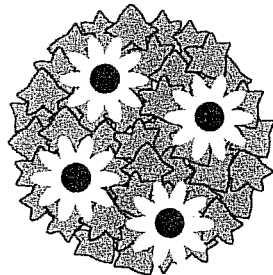
- to 2' tall
- partial sun to shade ◐ — ●
- drought tolerant
- orange or red flowers



Flower/Ground Cover

Beach Sunflower
Helianthus debilis

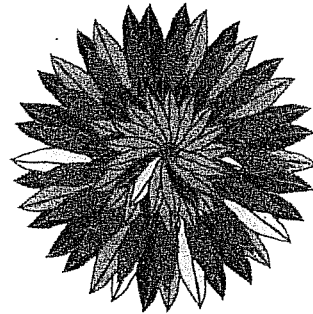
- to 1' tall
- sun ○
- natural



Ground Cover/Shrub

Cast-Iron Plant
Aspidistra elatior

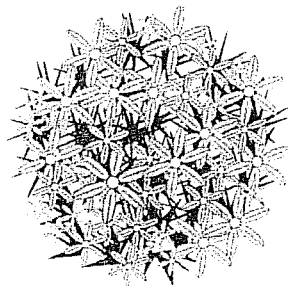
- to 2' tall
- partial sun to shade ◐ — ●
- natural



Flower/Ground Cover

Blue-eyed Grass
Sisyrinchium spp.

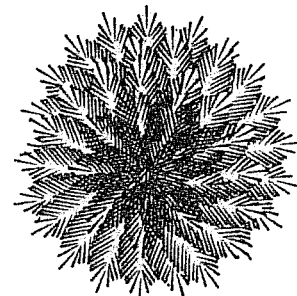
- to 1' tall
- sun to partial shade ○ — ◐
- oasis
- blue flowers
- native



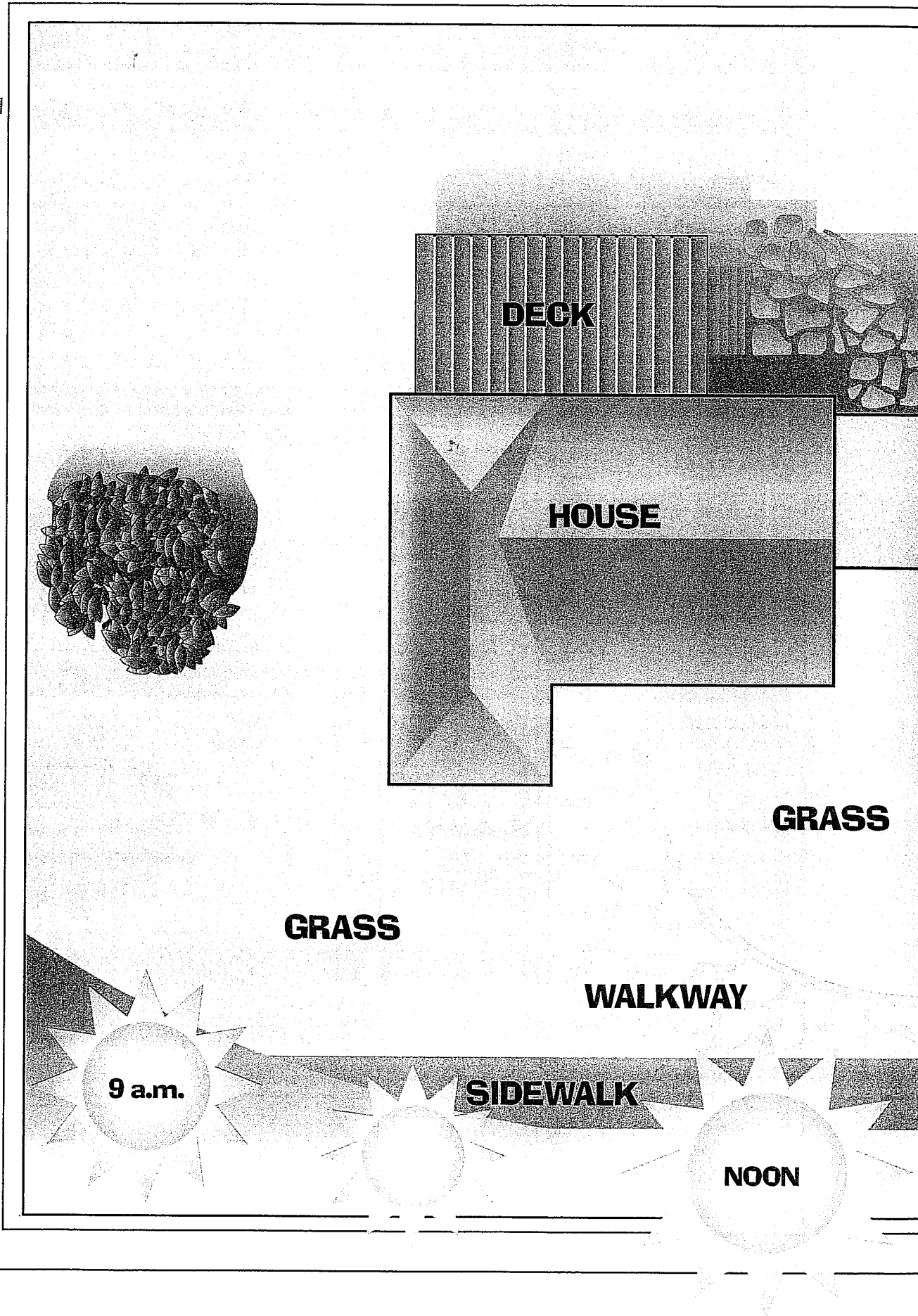
Ground Cover/Shrub

Coontie
Zamia pumilia

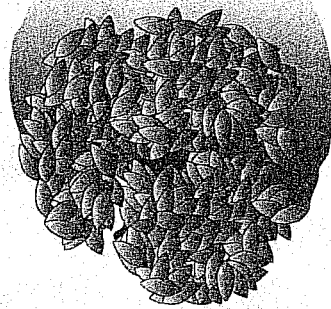
- to 3' tall
- sun to shade ○ — ●
- natural
- native



Give Shape to a Xeriscape

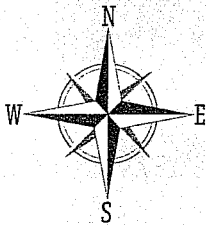


GRASS



DRIVE WAY

GRASS



5 p.m.

KEY

- = Full Sun
- ◐ = Partial Sun and Partial Shade
- = Shade

Native: plant species that have made west-central Florida home for thousands of years

Habitat value: creates food or nesting/foraging habitat for birds and wildlife

Oasis: much watering needed

Drought tolerant: little watering needed

Natural: should be able to survive on rainfall alone

See Back Page For an Example of a Completed Xeriscape Design

TIPS

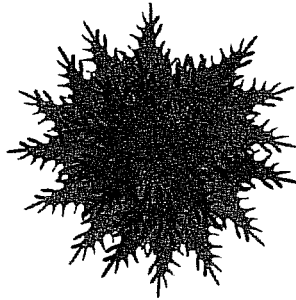
- If you are creating pathways and play areas covered with mulch, it might be easier to design those first and then place plants around them.
- Remember to group plants with similar water needs together.
- Keep in mind the position of the sun and where the shady areas are. If you plant tall trees, you will create shade on the north side of them.
- "Layer" the Xeriscape landscape so that the smallest plants are closest to the home and the tallest trees are farthest away.



Ground Cover/Shrub

Juniper *Juniperus chinensis*

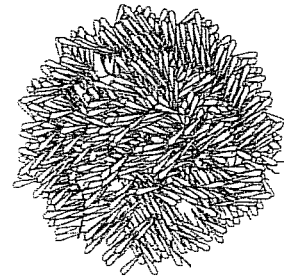
- to 8' tall
- sun ○
- natural



Tree

Weeping Willow *Salix babylonica*

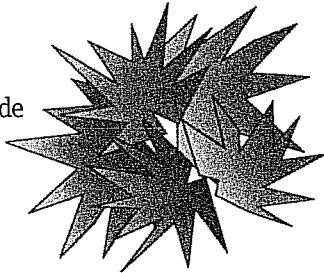
- to 40' tall
- sun ○
- oasis



Shrub

Saw Palmetto *Serenoa repens*

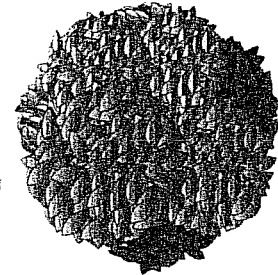
- to 8' tall
- sun to partial shade ○ — ●
- natural
- native
- habitat value



Tree

Florida Elm *Ulmus floridana*

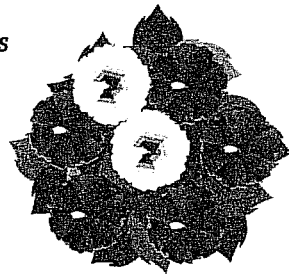
- to 60' tall
- sun ○
- natural
- native



Ground Cover/Shrub

Hibiscus *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*

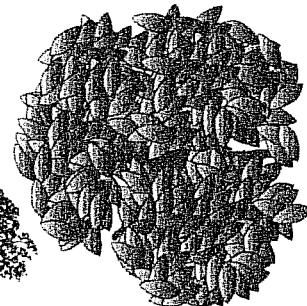
- to 10' tall
- sun ○
- oasis
- red, yellow and orange flowers



Tree

Live Oak *Quercus virginiana*

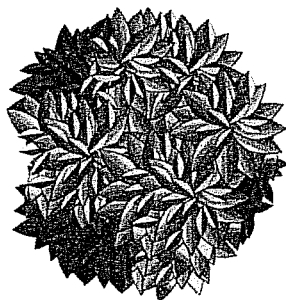
- to 80' tall
- sun ○
- natural
- native
- habitat value



Shrub

Wax Myrtle *Myrica cerifera*

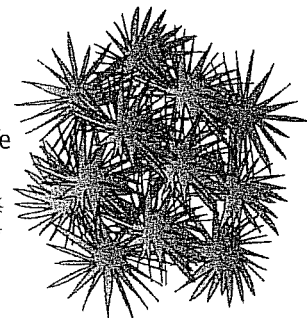
- to 20' tall
- sun to shade ○ — ●
- natural
- native
- habitat value



Tree

Cabbage Palm *Sabal palmetto*

- to 60' tall
- sun to partial shade ○ — ●
- natural
- native
- white flowers



These are the seven guidelines people use when creating a Xeriscape landscape. Becoming familiar with them will help you make your design.

1 Designing a Xeriscape landscape

Determine which areas of the yard are wet or dry, shady or sunny.

2 Arranging the plants

When you place plants in your design, make sure you are giving them an appropriate home to grow. Group together plants that need the same amount of sun, shade and water together. "Layer" the Xeriscape so that the smallest plants are closest to the home and the tallest trees are farthest away.

3 Improving the soil

Florida soil is sandy, so water seeps through it quickly. Mix organic matter, such as homemade compost, peat, manure or topsoil into your flower or vegetable gardens to improve the soil's ability to hold water.

4 Practical turf areas

Turf grass can require more water and maintenance than any other part of the landscape. Always look for drought-tolerant varieties when installing new turf areas.

5 Water wisely

By grouping plants according to their water needs, you can water more efficiently. If you group all the "oasis" plants near each other, it will be easier for you to water them when they need it. It may be the only section of your yard that you ever need to water.

6 Use mulches

Pathways and play areas covered by 2 to 3 inches of mulch or wood chips will reduce weeds and slow erosion. Mulched areas never need water!

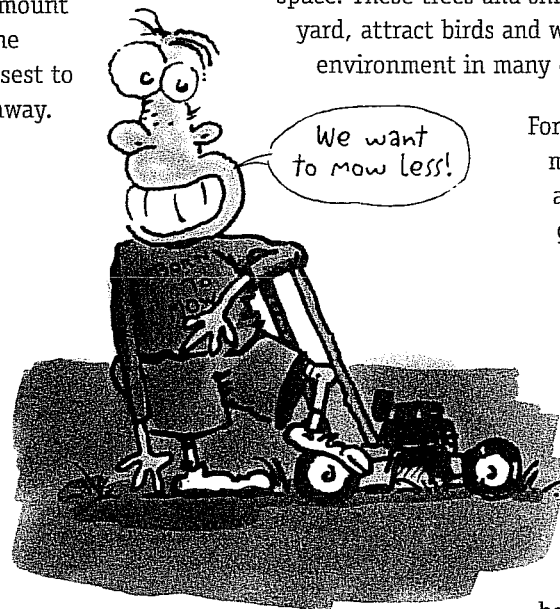
7 Proper maintenance

Keep the yard trimmed, mowed and weed-free. Usually it takes less effort, money and water to maintain a Xeriscape garden than a traditional yard.

A Commonsense Approach to Lawns

Lawns and fun go together. Lawns have countless uses — including barbecues and picnics, volleyball and Frisbee. The downsides of a lawn include mowing, fertilizing and watering.

Today, with concern for the environment increasing, many people are looking closely at their yards and turning to principles of Xeriscape to make their yards more Earth-friendly. The Southwest Florida Water Management District provides a *Waterwise Florida Landscape* booklet featuring a number of trees and shrubs that people can plant in otherwise unused lawn space. These trees and shrubs can beautify a yard, attract birds and wildlife and help the environment in many other ways.



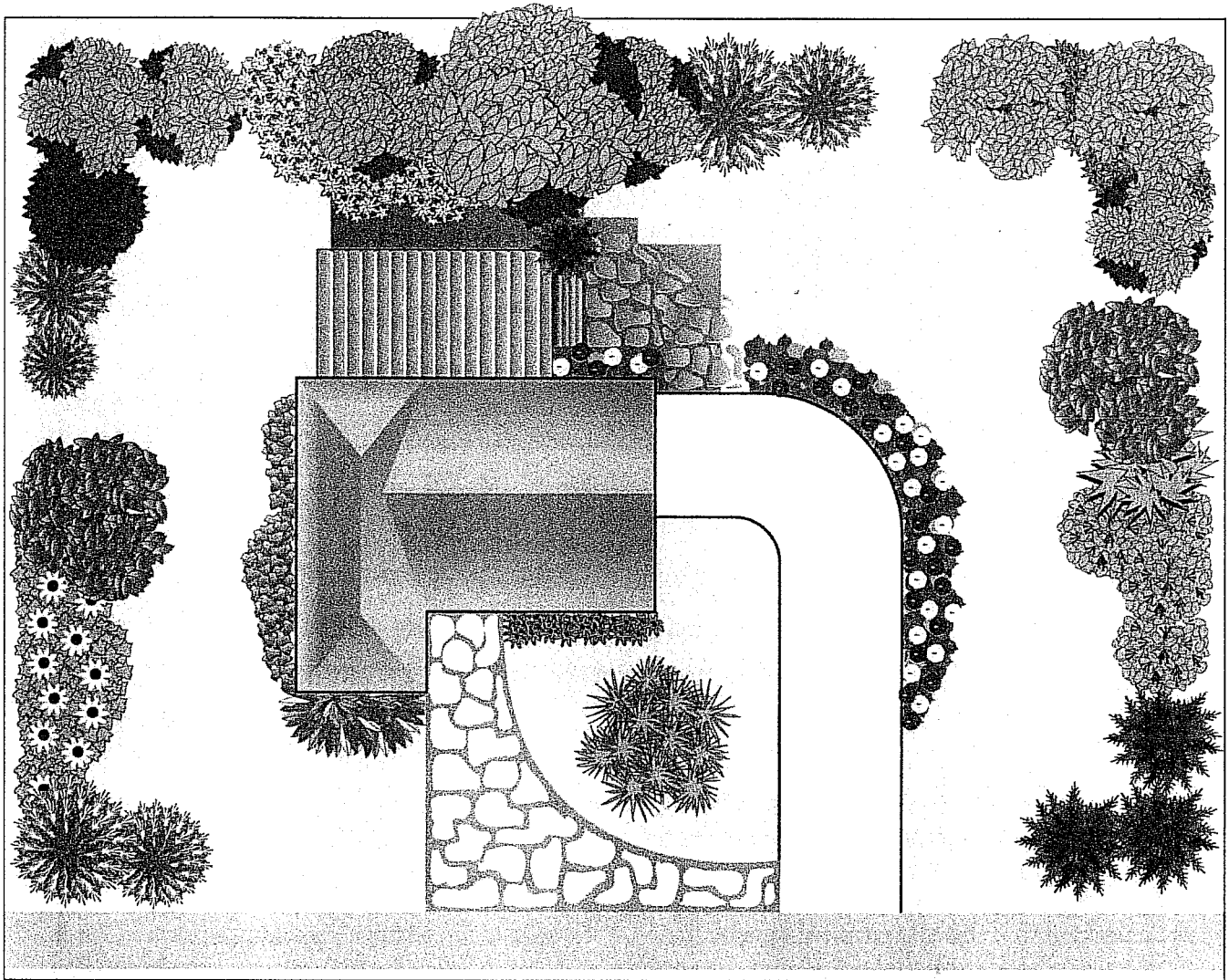
For example, less lawn means less mowing — and less mowing with gas-powered mowers means better air quality in the neighborhood. Many of the plants and shrubs listed in the *Waterwise Florida Landscapes* booklet also require less fertilizer than lawns. Less fertilizer means better water quality in

nearby streams and rivers, and that means healthier fish. Lastly, since many of the plants in a Xeriscape can survive on rainfall alone, less lawn means using less water — and using less water in the yard helps preserve local water resources.

Nothing beats the fun a lawn provides a home. But in applying principles of Xeriscape to unneeded lawn areas, a home can have a "lawn" of fun and protect the environment, too.

For additional information about water-saving yard practices or to learn the locations of various Xeriscape demonstration sites throughout west-central Florida, contact the Southwest Florida Water Management District at (352) 796-7211 or in Florida at 1-800-423-1476, extension 4757.

Example of a Completed Xeriscape Landscape Design



Southwest Florida *Water Management District*

www.WaterMatters.org



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