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## Water-Free Ways to Spruce Up Landscaping

Last year was Atlanta's second driest on record. New England has seen water reserves reach record lows, and destructive, deadly brush fires have become more routine in the West, where severe drought conditions exist, says real estate list master Bert Sperling, who tracks shortages at [www.droughtscore.com](http://www.droughtscore.com). But curb appeal doesn't have to suffer. It can flourish without heavy watering if smart choices are made.

**1. Go dry.** Some plants require a little water to get established, but once they've matured, they can remain dry. Xeriscaping, or drought-tolerant landscaping, refers to landscaping approaches that require little water to prosper. Specific plants must be selected for each climate. For Reno, Nev., for instance, an alpine desert area with significant development, one landscape architect suggests Artemisia-family plants such as Silver Mound and Dusty Miller. Also, mulch to conserve water around plant roots. The site [www.xeriscape.com](http://www.xeriscape.com) offers more tips.

**2. Fake grass.** Originally used for sports centers, faux grass has gone residential with products such as EasyTurf ([www.easyturf.com](http://www.easyturf.com)). One glitch: a green lawn may look a bit out of place when everything else in winter is barren or brown, warns Rachel Hart, landscape architect with Artemesia Landscape Architecture ([www.artemesiala.com](http://www.artemesiala.com)) in Reno, Nev.

**3. Lay the groundwork.** Ground covers that look good all year are smart substitutes for grass. Consider creeping thyme, low-growing yarrow, and low-growing sedums.

**4. Spread pebbles.** For a nice textural Zen look, think pea gravel, decomposed granite, or colored rocks such as Arizona river rock. Accent with large boulders. Don't cover a yard completely with rocks since it will reflect too much heat, especially if pebbles are white, says Lance Walheim, garden expert for Bayer Advanced ([www.bayeradvanced.com](http://www.bayeradvanced.com)) in Peoria, Ill.

**5. Pave with hardscape, such as brick.** Because brick is porous, water percolates through it and into reserves rather than running off. Pockets of xeriscaping materials soften edges and add color.

### CONSERVATION TIP

Paired with an electronic control, a drip irrigation system will conserve water by applying it directly to roots rather than dousing a wide area. Even the best system, however, needs diligent home owners who adjust it according to the seasons.



**SLIDE SHOW**

View more trends in landscaping

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Sources: Bert Sperling, *Droughtscore.com*; Rachel Hart, landscape architect, Artemesia Design, [www.artemesiala.com](http://www.artemesiala.com); Lance Walheim, horticulturist, Bayer Advanced, [www.bayeradvanced.com](http://www.bayeradvanced.com)