


designer's notebook

landscaping tips that maximize our desert's beauty the natural way

FOR NATE DOWNEY and Melissa McDonald, the principles of Santa Fe Permaculture—a local landscape design firm built upon water-wise philosophies—bountiful xeric gardens are easier to create than you might think. This Chaco Canyon-inspired courtyard on the city's northside, created to take advantage of a natural drainage area, further increases smart water use with simple techniques like terracing, deep-pipe irrigation, and a reliance on desert-friendly blooms. "Beauty and ecology are what we're all about," says Downey. Info: 505-424-4444, 551 W Cordova, #458, sfpermaculture.com—AM 



Xeric plants don't have to be bland. Russian Sage needs little water and provides splendid color from late summer until early fall.

Terracing, with these stacked-stone retaining walls, helps more of our precious rainwater soak into the ground—instead of running off. A deep-pipe irrigation system further reduces water use: gravel-filled PVC pipes are installed vertically into the ground and hidden by mulch, to send moisture directly to the root zone. Besides adding visual interest, properly sited terracing also shelters plants from wind and sun.

A granite fountain from Stone Forest (213 S St. Francis) provides a strong focal point, along with a recycling system that minimizes water waste.

Native grasses like this silky thread grass *Nassella (Stipa) tenuissima*, a Plants of the Southwest staple, provide texture with little water expenditure.

Agastache (in particular, Desert Sunrise from Santa Fe Greenhouses, left) and the easy-to-care-for butterfly bush (right) add dramatic color and dimension.

Locally-harvested flagstone provides natural weed control while, even more importantly, offers an attractive ground cover.