

A Waterwise Native Landscape Planting Design

By Scott Vogt, Executive Director/Horticulturist

For over 30 years, the arboretum has promoted the use of native and adaptable plants in the landscape. Our mission encourages stewardship and conservation. These tenets are the main reasons waterwise gardening is gaining in popularity. A waterwise landscape can simply be defined as an environmental design that minimizes the need for water. It should be our goal to develop a landscape that uses less water, saves money, requires less work, and creates a beautiful display throughout the year.

It can be tough gardening in Kansas. The unrelenting wind coupled with summer temperatures can stress even the hardiest plants. Native plants still deliver. Their deep roots and leaf adaptations make them durable and drought tolerant. Here are the elements of a successful waterwise garden.

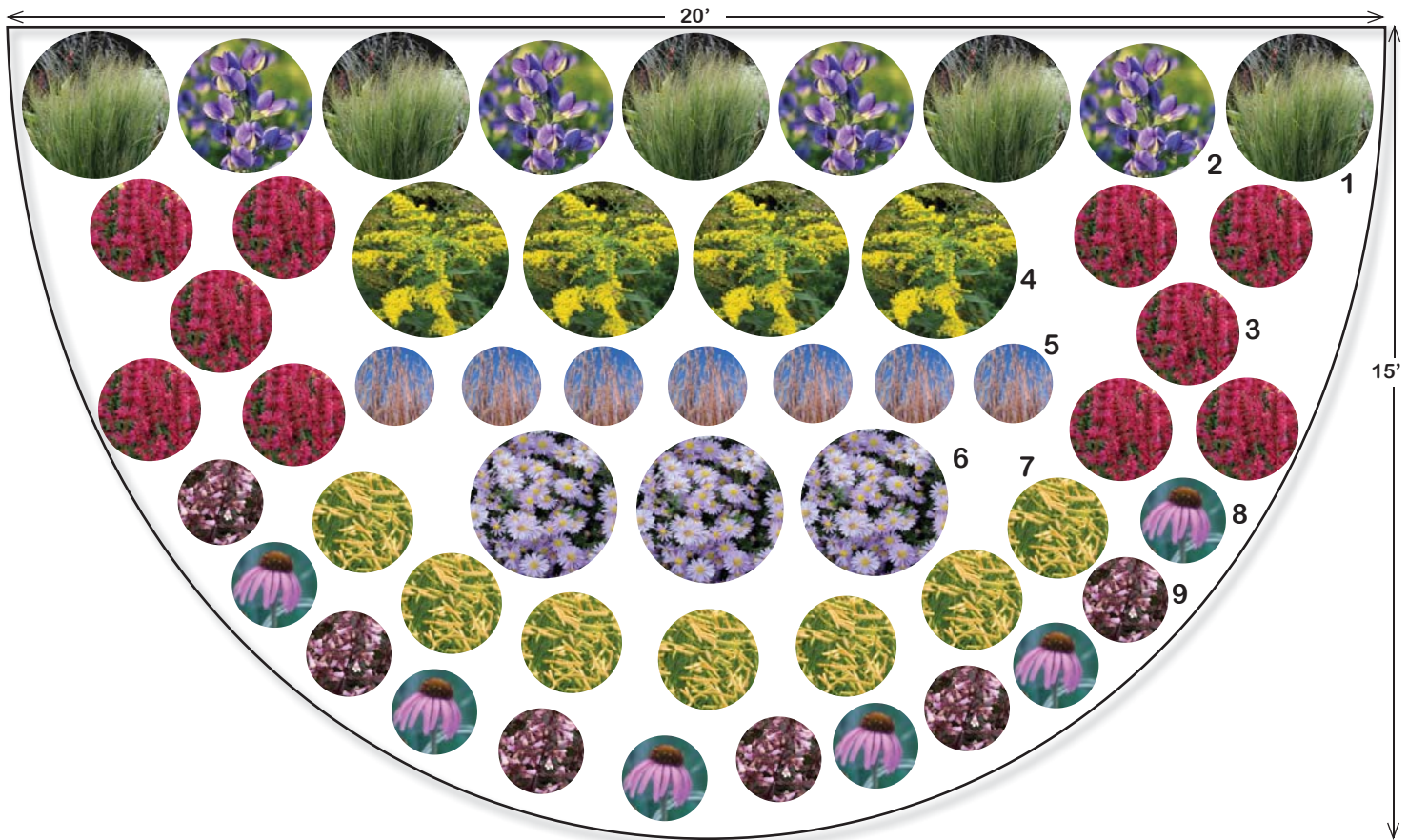
Matching plants to our climate is the most important goal in establishing and maintaining a waterwise garden. Anytime you stray too far from this goal, the plants don't flourish and they require more care and water.

Group plants according to their water needs. Evaluate your amount of sun/shade and soil type. Choose plants that will thrive in the microclimate of your yard. Sun-loving native plants need at least six hours of direct sunlight to grow happily. Otherwise, look at more shade-loving species.

Irrigate efficiently by putting water where the plants need it. We use drip irrigation because very little water is lost through evaporation. Overhead sprinklers can be used but focus their use early in the morning or later in the evening. Avoid the mid to late afternoon because more water is lost to evaporation and wind during this time.

Apply at least two inches of mulch to landscape plantings. Mulch keeps the soil a more even temperature, controls erosion, reduces water loss through evaporation, and helps control weeds. Too much mulch can have an adverse effect on wildflowers and grasses. Keep mulch at least 3-4 inches away from the crowns or main stems of the plants.

Increase the organic matter in your soil. Clay soils are often either too wet or too dry. Improving the soil by incorporating organic matter such as compost, leaves, and cotton burr compost will increase the soil water-holding capacity and fertility. Don't go overboard, because too much fertility causes other problems. Sandy soils benefit from organic matter as well.



LEGEND: 1. *Panicum* 'Northwind'; 2. *Baptisia* 'Blueberry Sundae'; 3. *Agastache* 'Raspberry Summer'; 4. *Solidago* 'Fireworks'; 5. *Schizachyrium scoparium* 'Twilight Zone'; 6. *Aster* KICKIN® 'Lavender'; 7. *Bouteloua* 'Blonde Ambition'; 8. *Echinacea angustifolia*; 9. *Penstemon* 'Dark Towers'; (*More information about these species can be found in the plant list.)

Other designs at dyckarboretum.org/landscaping-with-native-plants/