

## Maintain the Landscape:

No garden is completely maintenance-free. Like more traditional landscape, Xeriscapes require regular maintenance to look their best. This includes pruning shrubs and trees, deadheading perennials, aerating, mowing and fertilizing lawns, and controlling pests.

### Pruning

Regular pruning keeps plants looking good and promotes plant vigor. Also, many shrubs bloom on new wood, so pruning is necessary in order to have flowers. The best time to prune most shrubs and trees is in the winter to early spring. Prune dead or unwanted branches slightly away from the trunk, on the outer edge of the branch collar (a ring of compressed bark at the branch crotch). Leave the entire branch collar in tact, to allow new bark to form over the cut.

### Deadheading

Deadheading means removing spent flowers before they mature into seed heads. Deadheading makes the garden look more attractive, helps prevent unwanted, self-sown seedlings, and encourages the plant to produce more flowers. Many plants, including valerian, catmint and salvia, will bloom repeatedly during the summer if deadheaded.

### Aerating

Regular core aeration will reduce thatch buildup and loosen the soil. This promotes better root growth, and allows water and fertilizer to move into the root zone. Core aeration can be done with a core aeration machine or a manual aeration device. The plugs can be left on the lawn to disintegrate or can be added to compost piles. Core aeration is best done twice a year, in spring and late summer.

### Mowing and fertilizing

Lawns should be mowed to a height of 2-3", and should be mowed frequently enough so that no more than 1/3 of the grass height is removed at any one time. Make sure the mower blades are sharp, and don't water when the grass is wet. Fertilization schedules will vary according to the type of grass involved.

### Controlling pests

The most effective way to control garden pests is through Integrated Pest Management (IPM). There are four steps to IPM - discovering the problem, identifying the cause, monitoring the situation, and managing the problem through a variety of techniques, including using disease-resistant plant, spraying insects with water, using sprays of BT bacteria to manage caterpillars, and using pesticides or herbicides.

Your local Colorado State University Extension office is a great source for more information on this topic.