

## Conserving Water with Native Landscaping

Location: **Las Vegas, Nevada**  
Type of property: **Private, 18-hole golf course**  
Type of membership: **ACSP for Golf**  
Member since: **1994**  
Certified since: **1995**

Located in one of the driest desert climates in the U.S., the Tournament Players Club (TPC) at Summerlin course faces increased scrutiny and challenges regarding water use by the public and local regulations. Upon joining ACSP in 1994, golf course superintendent Dale Hahn decided to naturalize a 7,500 square foot area with drought tolerant native plants.



Hahn selected this project for a number of reasons. One reason was to convert what was an unsightly area populated with Sheep's fescue into a more aesthetically-pleasing native plant garden. Further, this area of course required a fairly high amount of water use. Converting it to a desert garden would significantly reduce the amount of water required to maintain it. Additionally, the desert garden would serve as an educational tool for members, informing them about the variety of native plants that could be found on and around the course.

The project began by capping the existing irrigation lines in the project area, which caused the grass to die and dry out. The dead grass and associated organic matter was then removed, and the area was cleaned down to bare soil. Three hundred plants in one-gallon containers were planted, representing eighteen species of desert plants. Once the plants were in place, desert rock and soil were hauled in from other parts of the property, and spread over the entire garden area in order to better match it to the surrounding desert habitat. Labels were professionally printed and assigned to the plants, allowing members and their guests to learn what the different plants were that were selected for the garden.

The resulting desert garden requires occasional hand-watering and pulling of weeds, but is considerably less expensive to manage than the previous Sheep's fescue was, both in terms of man-hours and associated materials such as fertilizer, chemical, and fuel. The low-maintenance garden requires just 10 percent of the man-hours needed to maintain the fescue, and resulted in a savings of approximately half a million gallon of water per year.

**For more information on xeric landscaping, including suggested plants, see:**

- ◆ [University of Nevada's Facilities Management & Planning website](#)
- ◆ [University of Florida Extension](#)
- ◆ [Water Sense Native Plant Lists](#)

The plants chosen for the garden are native desert plants. Many of the plants flower in the spring, adding additional aesthetic appeal to the course, while at the same time providing nectar as a food source for hummingbirds. The total cost of the project was under \$3,000, resulting in a savings of over \$2,000 per year from reduced labor and water usage. Many of the plants used in the project were transplanted from other portions of the property, which helped to keep the cost of the project so low.