

# Take your spouse along

My wife of many years and I have enjoyed an equitable arrangement. I love to hunt and fish, at every opportunity, and she is glad to get rid of me. Don't get me wrong, we get along very well, she just enjoys our time apart once in a while, something about her nerves.

Without me "under foot" as she calls it, things around the house seem to get done with an almost magical speed. She claims I am a hindrance to all forward progress of anything that furthers the good of the cause. Having no intelligent retort to such comments, I usually load up my duffel bag and head to the woods.

The woods are my magical space, not just because that is where fish and game live, but also because it is comfortably out of the way of the sarcastic prattle of a hyperactive spouse. So, in the interest of marital harmony and bliss, I take to the woods.

Last summer, my wife came home and announced she was officially retiring from her job. It hit me between the eyes like a ballpeen hammer. I had no idea she was considering such a thing.

When I questioned her thought process, she said: "It is all I have been talking about for the last year. If you would pay attention to me sometimes, you might just figure out what goes on around here. Besides, now that I am retired, I can start going with you on all your trips."



## Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Admittedly, the proposition seemed a bit scary at first. Sure, we have gone camping, fishing and hunting together in the past. It was very difficult for both of us to get away together during the kid's years, and some of my trips were just not particularly spouse friendly. Hunting moose in the arctic regions with pouring down cold rain, for days on end, was not appealing to her.

All is not lost. We will all, hopefully, get to retire with our spouse and take to the great outdoors with greater frequency. The secret to making it work is to balance the trip, with both people getting to do things they want, seeing sights that interest them.

Begin during the planning stages of the trip. Have conversations regarding what activities you want to do, how you are going to spend time together, and what you want to do about food and lodging. It is perfectly alright to have a few activities apart from each other during the trip.

For example, your



Happy anniversary to this girl who tied the knot with me 46 years ago. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

spouse is probably not going to want to sit in a boat on a flat in the Florida Keys for seven straight days, throwing flies at passing tarpon. You might have to cut back the fishing days in exchange for several days doing the local attractions. A trip to the Shipwreck Museum, and the Hemingway House in Key West, topped off with dinner at Margaritaville would be something both people would enjoy.

When we head south to fish, our days on the water usually wind up being 10 hours. After that long in a boat and add some time to clean fish and get gear cleaned up, the entire day is gone. A good idea is to head to the room, shower up, and head out for a nice dinner at one of the fine restaurants in the area. Don't expect the spouse to head home and cook dinner featuring the catch of the day.

Packing for the trip

demands extra attention. Your spouse may not know what to pack for a safari. Nothing can ruin a trip faster than needing an essential thing or gear, and realizing you forgot to pack it. Pack together and discuss the conditions, so the proper clothing and footwear can be brought.

Our first big trip together was to Argentina for a game safari. I had been there before, so packing was easy for me. My wife had never been, so she had no idea what was necessary. We spent many hours going over lists and discussing her expectations. As it turned out, the trip went perfectly, and she had the time of her life. We planned and packed together.

Plan for some quiet time, and some alone time. My normal evening routine in a lodge atmosphere is to have an adult beverage or two, dinner, shower, and bed early to be rested up for the next day's activities.

My wife and I planned the lodge evening together. We shared a bottle of wine, enjoyed dinner, and went for a walk in the moonlit evening. I showed her the Southern Cross and we spent several hours around a fantastic campfire. We did not wake up as bushy-tailed as planned, but we have a fantastic memory from that evening around the fire.

Getting to share the outdoors with your significant other is about as good as it gets. We may make a little noise about being underfoot or in the way, but it just takes a little adjusting and compromise over the activities.

In our case, this month marks our 46th anniversary. I have no idea where the years went. Seems just yesterday we were a couple of kids in the Golden, Colorado, courthouse, with all of it in front of us. Now we are grandparents, move a lot slower, and barely recognize the person looking

back at us in the mirror.

No matter, we ain't slowing down now. We have a trip to Africa coming up soon, and we rebooked again for Argentina. After that, she said something about seeing the Northern Lights up close, and some glaciers, so Greenland seems to be on the list. Happy anniversary kid, and let's get packed. We have to spend the kids' inheritance.

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# Water saving landscapes are really catching on



## Gardening From A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh



There are so many fantastic water wise landscapes in Montrose; like this one with great color, attractive use of drought tolerant plants, a smart lawn space and good use of a steep slope. (Linda Corwine McIntosh/Special to the MDP)

Doesn't the idea of saving water in your landscape sound like a good idea? Especially if it looks nice and provides you with great color, variety, and trees. That's the idea behind xeriscaping or water saving landscapes.

I remember the good old days when my parents and the rest of the neighbors would turn their water on and water the grass until it ran off of the lawn and down the gutter enabling me to sail my homemade popsicle stick schooner until mom called me in for dinner.

Oh those were the days! It didn't matter if the lawn had a slope so steep that the lawnmower would try to roll down the hill if you didn't have a firm grip on it. Lawns went from the front of the house to the sidewalk and started again on the other side of the walk to the street.

Sorry kids, but those days have all but disappeared. Now I'm so impressed with the water wise landscaping that I'm seeing all around town. People are starting to landscape wisely.

I know a lot of people were really geared up for

a summer drought but so far, the cool wet spring and winter moisture has been a blessing for so many people. However, remember this is Colorado and that could all change almost overnight.

With that said, there seems to be a misconception by some people that low water use in the landscape means gravel and rock. In fact, a lot of people refer to xeriscaping as zero scaping. The term xeriscaping, pronounced zer-i-scaping (not zero scaping) actually came from the Greek word "xeros" meaning dry, and scape, referring to vista, forming the word xeriscaping. While it's true, gravel and rock won't use as much water as a lawn, rock landscapes are definitely hot! So you'll probably need to run your air conditioner more.

I get concerned for trees when people tear out their lawn and replace the turf with rock. If the tree was counting on the irrigation from the lawn and suddenly that water source is removed, the tree will not be happy.

Tree roots on an estab-

lished tree could extend three to five times beyond the drip line of the tree so watering the entire root system could be a problem.

I want to point out a few pretty simple things that you can do to become more water wise. For example, you can actually "train" your yard to be less thirsty by watering less frequently but more deeply. This will encourage deeper roots which in turn will make your lawn be more drought tolerant.

Shallow roots need more frequent irrigation and don't do as well during the winter months. It will take a little time, but gradually reducing the amount of water that you give your grass can be a good thing.

When you water your turf try to water to a depth of about 6 inches. You can check the depth of the water penetration with a long bladed screwdriver inserted into the turf after you water. Don't water your grass again until it looks thirsty by exhibiting a grayish color or footprints that don't pop back up after you walk across the lawn.

Try to get to the point of watering every three

days or even once a week depending on the condition of the grass. The best time of day to irrigate is actually between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Do you know that the depth of the grass roots is affected by the height of the grass blade? Short, scalped turf will have a shorter root system. Mowing your grass to a height of about 2.5 to 3 inches every week will encourage strong, healthy, more drought tolerant roots.

Narrow strips of turf, corners, and isolated islands of grass can be extremely difficult to water and usually end up wasting a lot of water. Steep slopes with a south or west exposure will require more frequent watering than an east or north slope. Bluegrass in these areas could be replaced with low-water need plants or terracing to reduce water runoff. Using alternative plantings, such as junipers or low-water need ground covers, may be a better choice for these areas.

Even though buffalo grass lawns save water, I'm not a big fan of them because they don't green up soon enough in the spring for my liking and go

dormant too early in the fall. There are alternative grasses, including a variety of fescue grasses or blue grama. One thing I do like about bluegrass lawns is that they can get pretty drought stressed and be brought back to life with a little water and fertilizer.

You may want to use native plants, which are usually pretty drought tolerant, to replace water-consuming bluegrass.

Be cautioned though that the term "native plants" does not necessarily mean they are a low-water-needing plant. Many of our native plants, such as Colorado blue spruce and aspen are high-water-need trees. Know the water requirements of your plant before you plant. Put the low-water-need plants on a low-water-need irrigation system and plants that require a lot of water on a system for higher water need plants.

Mulch to protect the soil's moisture from the drying effects of the sun and wind. Use an inch or two of mulch on top of the soil around smaller flowering plants and a three-to-four-inch deep layer around

trees and shrubs.

There are a lot of really nice looking ground cover plants available to homeowners. Some ground cover plants can be used as an alternative to a grass lawn (especially in shaded areas). They can fill spaces between flagstone or pavers, or can be used as a "living mulch" that cools the ground and suppresses weed growth. Bare ground will usually blow around and can be a haven for weeds.

If you're in the market for water wise or native plants check your local garden centers. If you're shopping online, High Country Gardens or Southwest Soils have a good selection of plants but they're selling out fast.

Plant Select online and CSU are good sources for water wise information and lists of drought tolerant plants.

You might also want to take a stroll through the Montrose Botanic Gardens xeriscape garden to get a firsthand look at some of the great plants that they have.

Here's my definition of xeriscape or water wise landscapes: "Don't fight it. Use common sense, work with it, and let it work for you!" You can slowly replace a problem area or add a few drought tolerant plants here or there over the years until you achieve the landscape you love.

I hope you enjoy your Memorial Day weekend and get out and enjoy the landscape.

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