



rockeries & raised beds

*See [Choosing the Right Plants](#)
and its companion [Plant List](#)
for help selecting water-wise
plants that can thrive in a
rockery's dry growing conditions.
See www.seattle.gov/util (click
[Yard, then Natural Lawn &
Garden Care](#)).*

Rockeries level out landscape slopes, creating more useful space. They can also reduce water use, runoff and erosion by helping water soak into the ground. Held together by their own weight and placement rather than mortar, *dry-laid rockeries* offer an ideal opportunity to reuse and reconfigure stone or broken concrete. Mortared walls are less easily reused, and if not constructed with proper drainage, can trap water—increasing the risk of wall failure.

The Seattle Department of Planning and Development provides design information for rockeries of all heights in Client Assistance Memo #321: *Rockeries: Prescriptive Design and Installation Standards*, including information on drainage design. Rockeries over 48 inches high must be permitted and follow these prescriptive standards. Note that the Department of Planning and Development distinguishes rockeries from retaining walls, which provide a retaining function to soils, while rockeries are installed in areas that are primarily self-supporting. For more information on Client Assistance Memos and permitting, see *Resources* on page 20.

Raised beds utilize *Universal Design* principles, bringing plants closer to people and allowing those who otherwise might not be able to participate in gardening to get their hands dirty. Raised beds also provide a design feature in the landscape, defining spaces and accentuating transitions.

