

WATERSmart

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

LCRA
ENERGY • WATER • COMMUNITY SERVICES

Thin soils, hot weather and periodic droughts punctuated by torrential downpours make gardening in Central and South Texas a challenge. Incorporate LCRA's WaterSmart landscape guidelines to plan and create a well-designed, water-efficient landscape.



DESIGN FOR SUCCESS

- Plant turf on no more than 50%, or up to 7,000 square feet, of the landscape.
- Limit automatic spray irrigation for each home or business to 2.5 times the foundation footprint – or a 12,000-square-foot maximum.

PREPARE YOUR SOIL

- Use at least 6 inches of topsoil in planted areas.
- Use native soil from the site, or a fertile, easily crumbled soil/compost blend.
- Incorporate topsoil into 2 to 3 inches of the existing surface to enable water to drain adequately.

IRRIGATE EFFICIENTLY

Automated irrigation systems aren't necessary for a thriving landscape. If you choose to install an automated system, a licensed irrigator must install it according to state regulations.

Irrigation system guidelines:

- Use drip irrigation for landscaped areas. Turf may be irrigated with drip, but it is not required.
- Set up separate zones for turf and areas planted with shrubs, trees or perennials.
- Create hydrozones for plants with similar watering needs.
- Design the system to prevent overspray onto hardscapes.
- Equip sprinkler zones at the bottom of sloped terrain along curbs, sidewalks, driveways and other hardscapes with devices to prevent low-head drainage after the sprinkler zone is turned off. Those devices may include in-line check valves and sprinkler heads with check valves.

Recommended irrigation system features:

- A rain sensor, soil moisture sensor or weather sensor to stop the irrigation cycle during and after a rainfall event.
- In-line pressure regulators, flow control valves or sprinkler devices equipped with pressure regulation stems or nozzles to maintain efficient water flow.
- A controller featuring multiple start times, rain sensor capability, a water budget feature and a non-volatile memory in case of a power outage.

Use low-volume irrigation on median strips, parking islands and landscape areas less than 10 feet wide to avoid runoff and overspray.

CHOOSE PLANTS WISELY

Use native and drought-tolerant plants and turf that require little watering. Avoid invasive plants.

PLANT PREPPING, PLACEMENT AND SPACING

Proper plant placement and spacing is critical to plant health and long-term landscape quality.

- Consider the mature height and width of plants before planting them.
- Dig a hole for a plant or tree two to three times wider than the plant's root ball or plant's container.
- Blend existing soil with compost before sodding or seeding with turf grass.



USE MULCH

- Finish areas planted with trees, perennials and shrubs with a 2- to 4-inch deep layer of high quality 50/50 blend of organic mulch and compost.
- Use wood chip mulch free of man-made debris, shredded into coarse pieces from 1 to 3 inches.
- Use rock mulch only temporarily in planting beds until achieving full plant coverage, or as permanent mulch in areas with native shrubs and perennials.



MAINTAIN YOUR LANDSCAPE

- Replenish mulch a minimum of every two years in the fall and spring.
- Aerate turf grass within the first year of construction and twice a year afterward.
- Topdress turf grass with quality compost twice a year.
- Set your automatic irrigation system back to a normal schedule after the establishment period.

WATERsmart

Reduce water use and save money
through conservation rebates at
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