

*grows almost anywhere*

# WaterSmart Landscapes

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U P P E R G U L F C O A S T

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*thrives in full sun*

*thrives in sun or shade*

*survives flood or drought*

LOW MAINTENANCE &  
WATER RESOURCE FRIENDLY

## IS YOUR LAWN PROTECTING THE BAY?

From sprinkler to storm drain, from bayou to bay, the water used to maintain your yard remains untreated. **What you do to your lawn and what runs off your yard determines the health of the Bay.** If you think your contribution to water pollution is insignificant, add your runoff to that of your neighbors and combine that with the rest of the Galveston Bay watershed. **The result is runoff pollution** — the number one source of water pollution in most of our bayous.

Unfortunately many homeowners continue to damage our water by adding more fertilizer and pesticides than warranted. **During rainfall or overwatering, excess fertilizer and pesticides run untreated directly into our bays and bayous.** Every year algae blooms from excess fertilizer remove precious oxygen from our water resulting in fish kills. Many pesticides are toxic to aquatic life and they may also accumulate in the food chain. It is best to be prudent in their use, or perhaps not use them at all.

A WaterSmart yard utilizes plants and practices that require less water plus little or no fertilizers and pesticides. With minimal grass cover and maximum use of native and adapted plants, **the WaterSmart landscape is beautiful and easy to maintain and environmentally friendly.** The following section lists “Five ideas to get you started”. The list of “Five that Survive” contains five plants in each of the three categories that are very hardy. Remember, start small — it is not necessary to redo the entire landscape at once.

**DON'T RUNOFF, START NOW!**

## FIVE IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED

1) **Minimize pesticide use.** Let a natural balance occur in your lawn. Over-treating and over-watering your lawn can actually cause insect and fungal problems. So wait until the pests attack before applying pesticides.

2) **Fertilize only when needed,** and follow the label directions to the letter. Use fertilizer only if your grass starts to yellow slightly. Accept a less-than-deep shade of green and maybe even a weed or two.

3) **Don't bag it!** Leave grass clippings on your lawn. They make good fertilizer, and if you have a mulch mower the clippings are better incorporated into the grass. Also set your mower 3.5" for St. Augustine grass and 1.5" for Bermuda grass. Taller grass deepens the root system and makes better use of water deep in the soil.

4) **Group water loving plants together.** You can water them as a group and avoid over-watering the drought hardy plants. Use drip hoses in the beds for more thorough and effective watering. Water your lawn and beds only when they start to wilt. Over-watering can result from scheduled watering systems. Turn off the timer and wait until your grass and beds look like they need watering. Then water them thoroughly so that the ground is wet 6 to 12 inches deep.

5) **Choose the right plants.** Most plants for home gardening and commercial use are chosen because they are plentiful and inexpensive with little consideration for regional adaptability or maintenance requirements. Choose native or adapted plants for your landscape.

# FIVE THAT SURVIVE

The following section lists five varieties of lawn coverings, trees and shrubs that are particularly hardy. Once they are established they should not need much watering during the summer months.

## GROUND COVERS

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**Katie's Compact Ruellia:** This low dwarf mounding plant is a heavy bloomer. It produces violet "petunia"-like flowers spring through fall. A very tough, but beautiful plant. For sun or shade.



**Gulf Coast Muhly:** This native bunch grass looks spectacular grouped together in a landscape. The grass puts out feathery seed heads that shimmer pinkish-red in early fall sunsets. A grass worth having in your landscape. Full sun, good drainage.



**Palm Leaf Eupatorium:** The blue, powder-puff flowers bloom summer and fall with fern-like foliage. This is a native perennial and thrives in a well-drained sunny or shaded area.



**Blue Carex Sedge Grass:** Unlike the Gulf Coast muhly grass, blue carex sedge grass is much more compact and low to the ground. The plant has a blue-green color and a solid texture. It can reach up to 5 inches high. Full sun to part shade in wet or dry soil.



**Zexmania:** This lovely ground cover has a beautiful yellow flower which blooms throughout summer. A very WaterSmart and drought tolerant plant, it can tolerate some shade but is generally a sun loving plant.

## SHRUBS

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**Barbados Cherry:** This South Texas native, whether full-size or dwarf, is an evergreen shrub with pink flowers and red berries that grows to 5 feet high. With edible berries, it grows well in full sun or with some shade in a well-drained area.



**Dwarf Wax Myrtle:** This is a very hardy native evergreen shrub that thrives in well-drained full sun or dappled shade.



**American Beauty Berry:** In a well-this deciduous native shrub grows to about 6 feet and blooms white flowers in the spring with purple berries in the fall and winter.



**Yaupon:** This shrub is an excellent choice for winter color because of the red berries and the dense, dark leaves which dominate the plant. The shrubs are easily shaped, and very disease and pest resistant. Well-drained sun or shade.



**Dwarf Palmetto:** This palm-like plant is perhaps the most versatile of all our WaterSmart plants. It will tolerate sun or full shade, dry to wet soil. The plant also provides an excellent choice as understory growth.

## TREES

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**Texas Persimmon:** This Texas native is a deciduous tree that grows to about 16 feet and features smooth white bark. It flourishes in well-drained areas.



**Vitex:** This deciduous flowering tree grows to 16 feet in the bay area and features purple flowers in the summer.



**Mexican Plum:** In a well-drained area, this is the best of the native plums and can grow from 15 to 35 feet tall. Its beautiful white blossoms turn pink as they fade.



**Possumhaw:** With striking red winter color, this deciduous tree grows to 15 feet with adequate or poor drainage.



**Dahoon Holly:** Like a lot of hollies, the Dahoon holly is a hardy and graceful evergreen tree. It is valued for its heavy fruit set during winter, with orange-red berries.

The typical homeowner  
**applies 8-10 times as much**  
**pesticides and fertilizers**  
as does the average farmer  
on a per acre basis.

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This brochure is funded through the Clean Water for Armand Bayou Project, a joint project of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and Texas Sea Grant Program, funded through an EPA grant from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. Educational programs of the Texas A&M University System are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age or national origin.



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