

WaterSmart Landscapes

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 it determines the health of your local bayou and Galveston Bay.

Runoff from residential areas in the Galveston Bay watershed is the No. 1 source of water pollution in most of our bayous. However, you can take steps to reduce the pollution that flows off your yard by adopting WaterSmart practices.

What are WaterSmart landscapes?

A WaterSmart yard uses plants and practices that require little or no fertilizers or pesticides and less water than conventional lawns. With minimal grass cover and maximum use of native and adapted plants, the WaterSmart landscape can be beautiful, easy to maintain, and environmentally friendly.



WaterSmart garden at Armand Bayou Nature Center



WaterSmart yard using a crushed rock pathway

WaterSmart landscapes can reduce the amount of polluted runoff entering the storm drain system by 90 percent. They can also cut the amount of water you use for irrigation by 90 percent. By converting your lawn one section at a time, you can create a landscape that helps preserve the bay area and gradually reduces your maintenance time.

Native plants

WaterSmart landscapes use both native and adapted noninvasive plants. Native plants are suited to the Upper Texas Gulf Coast and therefore require less water and fewer fertilizers and pesticides. WaterSmart landscapes also use other nonnative plants and heirloom varieties that are adapted to the Gulf Coast climate.

As an added feature, the native plants attract wildlife such as birds and butterflies to our landscapes.

Fertilizers and pesticides

Unfortunately, many homeowners damage our water by adding more fertilizer and pesticides than their lawns need. During rainfall or overwatering, the excess fertilizers and pesticides run untreated directly into our bays and bayous.

Every year, algae blooms from excess fertilizer remove precious oxygen from our water, causing fish kills. Many pesticides are not only toxic to aquatic life, but they may also accumulate in our food chain. It is best to use them sensibly or not at all.

To protect our environment as well as save money on fertilizer, have your soil tested to ensure that you are giving your plants only what they need.

What you can do

Install a rainwater harvesting system:

Rainwater harvesting captures, diverts, and stores rainwater for later use. You can collect rainwater in a large cistern, tank, or barrel.



Rainwater harvesting system

Harvested rainwater is an alternate water supply and stormwater-management approach that anyone can use. It can reduce the amount of drinking water used for landscape irrigation. It reduces the demand on existing water supplies as well as decreases runoff, erosion, and contaminated surface water.

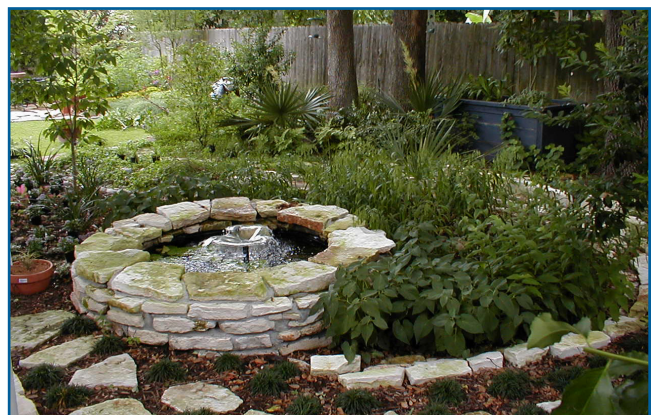
Plant a rain garden: A rain garden is a shallow excavated area in the soil that is planted as a garden and designed to capture rainfall from impervious surfaces such as roofs, sidewalks, streets, and parking lots.



WaterSmart rain garden with native plants and no turf grass

Rain gardens slow the flow of stormwater, allowing some of it to soak into the soil. They allow us to keep more of the rain that falls on our yards. When designed properly, water in a rain garden should stand for no more than 24 to 48 hours, too short a period for mosquitoes to hatch.

The plants, soil, and mulch in the rain garden filter the rest of the stormwater, making it cleaner when it finally enters the storm drain. Planted with native plants, rain gardens also function as habitat for wildlife such as birds and butterflies.



WaterSmart rain garden that captures and reuses runoff from the surrounding area

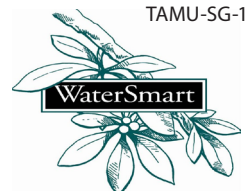
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