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Save water and money and improve the environment at the same time by careful choices in plants and landscape design.

March is SmartScape Month and the North Central Texas Council of Governments is teaching homeowners, through Texas SmartScape, how to use hardy native and adapted plants in yards and landscapes.

Search the interactive database at www.txsmartscape.com to find the plants right for your yard. Use the landscape design tool to guide you through the landscaping process and find tips to help you care for and maintain your SmartScape yard.

More than half the typical household's outdoor water use goes to watering the lawn and garden. To save money on your water bill:

- Use native plants that have adapted to the climate and can handle the Texas summer heat and cold snaps of winter.
- Reduce turf grass. Lawns typically require a large amount of supplemental water and generally more intensive maintenance than other vegetation.
- Water efficiently and effectively. Up to 50 percent of your irrigation goes to waste due to evaporation, wind, improper system design, or overwatering.
- Water your yard between 8 p.m. and 10 a.m. The watering of lawns and landscapes using irrigation systems (watering with sprinklers) in the City of Burleson is prohibited for both residential and commercial water customers, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. year round, however variances may be granted under certain conditions. The purpose of this restriction in Burleson is to prevent the unnecessary loss of water emitted from sprinklers due to evaporation. Watering between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. is permitted only if using a hand-held hose or soaker hose (drip system).
- Most lawns only need watering once every five-seven days in the growing season and every 15 - 20 days in the winter.
- Install drip irrigation in flower beds and at the roots of shrubs. Drip irrigation delivers almost 95 percent of the water to plants.
- Place a 3-inch layer of organic mulch around plants and on top of the soil in flower beds. This will hold in water to keep the soil moist longer.

Converting to a water-efficient landscape through proper choice of plants and careful design can reduce the use of water by 20 to 50 percent. SmartScape-approved plants require much less water once established and require little fertilizer and pesticides to thrive. Using these recommended plants, plus a few simple maintenance practices, can save homeowners significant money year round while still producing a lush looking landscape.