Landscape Conservation Guidelines

These guidelines can be adopted through ordinance, deed restriction or covenant where allowed by federal, state and local laws and regulations.

General

The Landscape Conservation Guidelines are modeled after the "Sensible Landscaping for Central Texas" guidebook for home builders and homeowners adopted by the Homebuilders Association of Greater Austin (http://www.hbaaustin.com) and are intended to provide builders and homeowners with a well-designed, water-efficient landscape.

Design

A. Turf shall not be planted on more than 50 percent, or up to 7,000 square feet, of the landscape. Longer leafed native grasses and wildflowers that use low amounts of water are not considered turf grass in this context.
B. Automatic spray irrigation for each home or business shall be limited to 2.5 times the foundation footprint, with a 12,000 square foot maximum. The footprint may include both the house and the garage, but not the driveway or patio.

Soil

A. There shall be no less than 6 inches of high quality topsoil in planted areas.
B. Topsoil shall be native soil from the site, or fertile, friable, blended soil/compost blend. Topsoil shall not be of any admixture of subsoil or slag and shall be free of stones more than 1.5 inches in diameter, lumps, refuse, plants or their roots, sticks, noxious weeds, salts, soil sterilants or other material detrimental to plant growth. If topsoil is delivered, it shall be obtained from a well-drained site that is free of flooding. Topsoil shall not be delivered or used while muddy. Non-native topsoil shall contain no less than 25 percent organic matter (compost) blended through the soil.
C. Topsoil added to the site shall be incorporated into existing surface in a 2-inch to 3-inch scarified transition layer to enable water to drain adequately through the different types of soil. Do not scarify within the drip line of existing trees that will be retained.

Irrigation

A. Automated irrigation systems shall not be required in any new landscape. However, if irrigation is installed, it shall be required to meet the guidelines outlined in this section.
B. All irrigation systems shall be installed in accordance with state law, Title 2 Texas Water Code, Chapter 34 and Title 30 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 344 rules, as regulated and enforced by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Irrigation contractors who install the irrigation systems must be TCEQ Licensed Irrigators.

C. Drip irrigation shall be used for all irrigated landscaped areas, excluding turf. Turf may be irrigated with drip, but it is not required.
D. Areas planted with turf shall be in separate zones from areas planted with shrubs, trees or perennials.
E. Hydrozoning of automatically irrigated areas will be scheduled with plants with similar watering needs.
F. All automatic irrigation systems are required to have a rain sensor, a soil moisture sensor or a weather sensor connected to an irrigation controller in order to stop the irrigation cycle during and after a rainfall event. Rain sensors are to be installed in a location where rainfall is unobstructed. Rain sensors should be adjusted to the 1/4-inch setting.
G. Sprinkler irrigation is prohibited in median strips, parking islands and all landscape areas less than 10 feet from curb to curb or 10 feet in width. Areas less than 10 feet curb-to-curb or 10 feet in width can be irrigated with low volume irrigation. Low-volume irrigation (subsurface drip irrigation or drip irrigation) shall be installed in long landscape strips less than 10 feet in width to avoid runoff and overspray onto the hardscape.
H. All new residential irrigation systems are required to have pressure regulation where static operating pressure exceeds the sprinkler manufacturer's recommended operating range, to eliminate extensive misting. These may include in-line pressure regulators, flow control valves or sprinkler devices equipped with pressure regulation stems or nozzles. Irrigation systems must have a controller that features multiple start times, rain sensor capability, a water budget feature and a non-volatile memory in case of power outage.
I. Scheduling recommendations shall be posted inside or immediately near the controller enclosure box for easy reference.
J. Homeowners shall be provided with a complete irrigation plan (or as-built drawing) that describes the location of each irrigation zone, control valves and sprinkler devices.
K. Sprinkler systems shall be designed with no overspray onto the hardscape.
L. Sprinkler zones located at the bottom of sloped terrain along curbs, sidewalks, driveways and other hardscapes should be equipped with devices such as in-line check valves and sprinkler heads with check valves that prevent low-head drainage after the sprinkler zone is turned off.

Plant Choice

A. Plants used must be native and drought tolerant. The grow green guide (http://austintexas.gov/department/grow-green/plant-guide) can be used as a reference for appropriate plants.
B. Turf grasses should be limited to low-water-use turfs. Do not plant St. Augustine grasses.
C. Invasive plants shall not be used. The grow green guide can be used as a reference for invasive plants to avoid.

Plant Prepping

A. A hole dug for a plant or tree should be 2 to 3 times wider than the container or root ball the plant is being stored in, insuring water is able to be absorbed by the plant's roots.
B. Make sure the existing soil has been blended with compost before the sodding or seeding with the recommended turfgrass.

Plant Placement and Spacing

Proper plant placement and spacing is critical to plant health and long-term landscape quality. Plant placement too close to buildings can cause problems with plant disease, insects and structural problems. Proper plant spacing ensures good air flow and room for plants to mature without crowding. Consider the mature height and width of plants before planting them.

Mulch

A. All areas planted with trees, perennials and shrubs shall be finished with a 2-inch to 4-inch deep layer of high quality 50/50 blend of organic mulch and compost blend.
B. Wood chip mulch must be clean wood chips free of man-made debris, shredded into coarse pieces ranging in size from 1 to 3 inches.
C. Rock mulch shall be used in planting beds only as temporary mulch until full plant coverage is achieved, or as permanent mulch in areas with native shrubs and perennials.

Maintenance

A. Replenish mulch/compost blend every two years at a minimum. Doing so in the fall and spring is recommended.
B. Aerate turfgrass within the first year of construction and twice a year after that (Oct. 1 and March 1).
C. Topdress turfgrass areas with quality compost twice a year (Oct. 1 and March 1) at a depth of 1/4-inch to 1/2-inch following the aeration and drag or rake it into the canopy and aeration holes.
D. Set the automatic irrigation system back to a normal schedule after the establishment period.