

With its ever-fluctuating climate and increasing water demands, Central Texas faces recurrent challenges in sustaining its ecosystems, agricultural endeavors, and growing urban communities. As droughts become more frequent and prolonged, embracing effective mitigation strategies becomes imperative. By proactively addressing water scarcity through innovative practices and collaborative efforts, Central Texas can safeguard its precious resources and preserve its vibrant ecosystems. Here are a few effective strategies your home can implement to conserve water in times of drought:

## PRACTICE WATER CONSERVATION

Water conservation is the first and often easiest step to conserve water at home.

- **Learn About Your Daily Water Use:** Be aware of how much water your household uses daily. You can calculate your indoor water usage [here](#).
- **Don't Leave the Tap On:** Don't leave the water running while you shave, do the dishes, brush your teeth, lather in the shower, and wash your hair.
- **Take Shorter Showers:** Limit showers to less than 5 minutes. If you take a bath, only fill the tub half full.
- **Only Run Your Dishwasher with a Full Load:** Scrape food from plates instead of rinsing them.
- **Explore What Free Tools are Available:** If you are an Austin Water customer, you can [request](#) free water conservation tools, including showerheads and aerators, simply by being a customer.
- **Time Outdoor Watering Wisely:** Water your lawn and plants during the early morning or late afternoon to minimize evaporation.
- **Use Mulch and Compost Outdoors:** Applying mulch around plants helps retain soil moisture, reducing the need for frequent watering.

## PERFORM REGULAR MAINTENANCE

Regularly inspect your plumbing for leaks and address them promptly. A small leak might seem inconsequential, but over time, it can result in substantial water waste. Common appliances to check for leaks include:

- **Toilets:** If your toilet has a leak, you could be wasting about 200 gallons of water every day. Check for toilet leaks by adding several drops of food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the toilet bowl within 30 minutes.
- **Faucets and Showerheads:** Check all faucets and showerheads for drips. A slow drip can waste as much as 20 gallons of water each day.
- **Washing Machine, Water Heater, and Dishwasher:** Check for water near the floor of these appliances.
- **Standing Water Outdoors:** Standing water outdoor your home could mean pipes underneath your home, or your irrigation system, have been damaged.

## UPGRADE TO WATER-EFFICIENT FIXTURES

Replace old, water fixtures with water-efficient alternatives. Check with your water utility provider to see if they offer any water-efficient fixtures for free or through a rebate. Austin Water [offers free](#) showerheads and aerators to residential customers.

- **Showerheads:** Conserve over 2 gallons per minute using a water-efficient showerhead, offered in both standard and soap-up valve variations that utilize only 1.5 gallons of water per minute.
- **Faucet Aerator:** Mix air with water to reduce the amount of water used without reducing water pressure. Bathroom aerators use 0.5 gallons of water per minute and kitchen aerators use 1.5 gallons per minute.
- **Older Toilets:** WaterSense® labeled high-efficiency models use 1.28 gallons per flush. Consider installing a dual flush model that can use even less water.

## IMPLEMENT WATER-SAVING LANDSCAPES (XERISCAPING)

Transforming your outdoor spaces into water-efficient landscapes can significantly reduce water consumption. Here are a few pointers to keep in mind when considering xeriscaping.

- **Keep Soil Quality in Mind:** To set up for success, ensure your lawn is built on a foundation of high-quality soil which provides both the ability to retain moisture as well as provide adequate drainage.
- **Use Native Plants When Possible:** Native plant species have the ability to thrive solely on rainwater, rendering them excellently suited for xeriscaping strategies. Texas boasts a wealth of appealing and [resilient native plants to chose from](#), presenting a wide array of options for landscaping.
- **Decrease Your Lawn Size:** Turfgrass stands as the foremost water consumer within yards. According to the EPA, lawns account for 30-60% of urban freshwater usage. Minimizing your lawn's size or eliminating turfgrass entirely can reduce water usage and maintenance needs.
- **Harvest Rainwater:** Install rainwater harvesting systems to capture and store rainwater for later use. This sustainable practice not only reduces strain on local water resources but also provides an additional water source for landscaping. To help offset some of the costs, always check with your local city or county to see if they offer any rebates or incentives for installing rainwater harvesting systems.
  - [The City of Austin offers a variety of rebates](#) on water conservation technology, including up to \$5,000 on rainwater harvesting systems.

