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 your yard determines the health of your local bayou and Galveston 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.

What is it?
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. 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
Certain varieties of plants are suited to the Upper Texas Gulf Coast and thus require less water and fewer fertilizers and pesticides. Many plants are native to this area and have been thriving here for centuries. Other non-native plants and heirloom varieties have been successfully adapted to the Gulf Coast.

WaterSmart landscapes are planted with native and adapted non-invasive plants. These plants are well suited to our climate and soil conditions; therefore, they require less watering once they are established and do not need chemical fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides to thrive.

WaterSmart landscapes can result in a 90% reduction in the amount of polluted runoff entering the storm drain system and an equal reduction in the volume of water used for irrigation. As an added feature, native plants attract wildlife such as birds and butterflies to our landscapes.
Fertilizers and Pesticides
Unfortunately many homeowners continue to damage our water by adding more fertilizer and pesticides than needed. You should get a soil test performed on your yard before applying any fertilizer to ensure you are only giving your yard what it needs. During rainfall or over-watering, excess fertilizer and pesticides run untreated directly into our bays and bayous. Every year algae blooms from excess fertilizer removes 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 sensible in their use, or perhaps not use them at all.

What You Can Do

Install a Rainwater Harvesting system: Rainwater harvesting is an alternate water supply and stormwater management approach anyone can use. Rainwater harvesting captures, diverts, and stores rainwater for later use. You can collect rainwater in a large cistern, tank or barrel. Implementing rainwater harvesting is beneficial because it reduces demand on existing water supply, and reduces run-off, erosion, and contamination of surface water. Rainwater harvesting can reduce the amount of drinking water used for landscape irrigation.

Plant a Rain Garden: A rain garden is a shallow excavated area in the soil planted as a garden and designed to capture rainfall from impervious surfaces. The stormwater pools for a period of time, slowing the flow and allowing some of it to soak into the soil. The rest of the stormwater is filtered through the plant material, soil and mulch. This allows us to keep more of the rain that falls on our yards while the stormwater that finally enters the storm drain is cleaner.

Planted with native plants, a rain garden function as habitat for wildlife such as birds and butterflies. When designed properly, water in the rain garden should stand for no more 24 to 48 hours, too short a period for mosquitos to breed.

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