

City of Mission Nativescapes Guidelines

Using native plants in your garden provides a multitude of benefits for people and wildlife, including water conservation, supporting birds and pollinators, cooling the environment, and aesthetic beauty.

There are many ways you can maximize those benefits in your space, and this document aims to equip you with the knowledge of best practices to maintain your garden.

Water Conservation Best Practices

- Follow the City of Mission Water Restrictions
 - Violations may result in a \$50.00 to \$200.00 fine
- Water your plants as needed, rather than following a rigid irrigation schedule
 - If your plants are wilted in cooler morning hours, they may need supplemental irrigation
 - Use a soil moisture sensor to check water levels in your garden soil
- Irrigate in the evening or at night to avoid evaporative water loss
 - Watering on hot, windy days limits how well water infiltrates your garden soil and is water inefficient
- Use drip irrigation or sprinklers that form large water droplets, or hand water with a hose
 - Misting sprinklers tend to lose water to the wind more easily
- Use an organic mulch for your garden beds
 - Wood chip, bark, or other organic mulch not only helps trap moisture in the soil, but also eventually breaks down and increases your soil organic matter and provides compost for your plants.

Cues for Care (based on [Wild Ones guidelines](#))

- Mown or trimmed edges
 - Maintaining mown groundcover or grass strips along pathways, driveways, or sidewalks helps indicate that your yard is a cared-for and purposeful space.
 - Using edgers – whether stone, plastic, or wood – helps visually delineate garden beds.
- Maintain open areas of groundcover plants, subshrubs, mulch, or other landscaping materials (rocks, pavers, etc.) that amount to at least 30% of your front yard area. Limit non-native turf grass to no more than 30% of the landscape. Have at least 50% of plant species be native plants.
 - Avoid obstruction of views or lines of sight
 - Keep an open pathway with a minimum of 10 feet in width that extends from front door to property line in case of emergencies
- Trimmed shrubs and trees (see [Texas A&M Agrilife Extension](#) and [Forest Service](#) recommendations)
 - Keep your garden beds trimmed to prevent shrubs or tree branches from sprawling over garden boundaries.
- Design your garden with discernable patterns and garden structure
 - Plant shrubs, wildflowers, groundcovers, or cacti along the foundation of your home.
 - Avoid blocking your windows, doors, or obstructing key lines of vision for you, your neighbors, and vehicles.
 - Plant clusters of plants in a balanced pattern over your yard. For example:
 - Islands: A larger shrub or tree in the center, surrounded by smaller plants.
 - Hedges: A series of plants of similar size and shape planted in a row.
 - Groundcovers: Low-growing plants forming a mat over the ground
- Include plant species that have bright flowers and bloom often.
 - See recommended plant list for ideas.

- Include bird feeders, bird baths, or other designed wildlife homes in your garden
 - See [Cornell Lab of Ornithology website](#) for bird feeding recommendations.
- Follow fire safety guidelines
 - Maintain a buffer around structures. Avoid dense shrubs immediately against walls, eaves, decks, air-conditioning units, wooden fences, and propane equipment. Use low vegetation, walkways, gravel, or other breaks closest to buildings.
 - Removal of accumulated dead material. Periodically remove dead limbs, dry grass, fallen palm fronds, brush piles, and excessive litter—particularly before the spring wildfire season or during severe drought.
 - Control of invasive grasses. Buffelgrass, guinea grass, Kleberg bluestem, and similar tall grasses should not be allowed to form a continuous dry understory.
 - Fuel breaks within larger thickets. Paths, driveways, patios, mowed strips, irrigated garden areas, or naturally open patches can divide a planting into smaller units.
 - Vegetation management near structures and access routes. Keep vegetation trimmed to maintain clear access and visibility for emergency responders, while preventing branches and dense plant growth from overhanging roofs or creating a continuous path of vegetation to nearby structures.
 - Drought-triggered maintenance. Remove dead fuels during declared drought or extreme fire-weather periods.

Wildlife-friendly Practices

- Avoid using pesticides and herbicides in your garden
 - Pesticides are often non-specific, meaning that they can spread to beneficial animals as well.
- Don't heavily prune your plants while they are flowering or fruiting
 - Leave the birds and butterflies food resources