



## “Currents” March 2025

### **Landscaping During a Drought**

Spring has officially arrived this year, but it looks a little different than usual. Kerr County is entering its fourth year of drought, and the signs can be seen all around us from dry creeks to a terrible wildfire season. Seasonal outlooks from the National Weather Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predict below average rainfall for the next few months, making water conservation a priority.

While we always encourage the use of native plants thanks to their hardiness and drought tolerance, this year is a bad year to plant anything. Even natives require regular waterings while they get established. Instead, we encourage you to focus on the plants you already have and take the time to upgrade other parts of your landscaping. Changing to drip irrigation is a great conservation method and provides your plants with a more direct water source than spray head irrigation systems. Having a slow drip applied directly to the root zone helps the plants absorb more water which reduces runoff. If you have young trees that are struggling during this summer, consider using slow-release tree watering bags to improve soil moisture. Watering in the morning or evening greatly reduces water loss due to evaporation. Even if you follow these watering suggestions, the intense sun can still dry up what little moisture you have in your soil. Applying a three inch layer of mulch to plant beds and around trees traps soil moisture and reduces evaporation. Remember to keep mulch a few inches away from the plant base or tree trunk to ensure aeration and prevent root problems.

Well-established native plants are much better equipped to stay green through a dry summer than a turf grass lawn. However, a brown yard is no reason to despair. Grasses can enter dormancy during a drought and appear dead just like they do in winter, but will come back to life once it rains. Cutting back on your watering schedule or not watering at all conserves and protects our water resources, so be proud of your lawn's summer blonde!

While you wait for rainy days, there are other ways to take care of your lawn that don't require using water. The best thing you can do for your yard is to change how you think about mowing. The length of roots underground are a direct reflection of the length of the grass blades above ground. Most residential mowers have a maximum height of 3-4" and mowing at the maximum height will promote root growth but not impact the way you use your yard. When cutting your lawn, it's important to not take off more than a third of the grass' height at one time. Cutting more than a third at a time will scalp your grass, making it more likely to die. Grass doesn't grow on a schedule, so be more flexible with your mowing schedule. Instead of mowing every week or every other week, pay attention to the height of your grass and only cut it when necessary. If you're cutting a third of the height at a time for a height of 3-4", that means your grass can get up to 4-5" before you need to cut it. If you have cut back on watering your lawn and let it go dormant, you won't need to cut it at all.

Water that is used on residential lawns is water that has been pulled from the river or our aquifers and is quality drinking water that will not be quickly or easily replaced. The Guadalupe River takes

care of our community by providing drinking water, recreational activities, and a beautiful view. We can give back to the river by reducing our water demand and conserving wherever possible. The City of Kerrville has a page on their website with water restrictions for outdoor uses and we are currently in Stage 3 [www.kerrvilletx.gov/512/Water-Restrictions](http://www.kerrvilletx.gov/512/Water-Restrictions). The Headwaters Groundwater Conservation District is also at a Stage 3 drought based on aquifer levels and has further information and guidelines on their website <https://www.hgcd.org/drought-information>.

### **Let's Keep *Our* River Clean**

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