Native and adapted plants are the ideal choice for an aesthetically pleasing water efficient landscape. Whether you are interested in a well-manicured look, or a more naturalistic landscape design, there are a number of plants with various structures, textures, and colors to meet your needs and help you save precious time and money.

Benefits of Native & Adapted Plants

Native and better-adapted plants in home and business landscapes serve as environmentally sustainable assets that are usually labor efficient compared with resource intensive varieties. Some of the characteristics leading more Texans to incorporate native and adapted varieties include:

- Drought tolerance
- Heat tolerance
- Water efficiency
- Typically low fertilizer requirements
- Typically low pesticide requirements

Native and Adapted Plants

Native plants are hardy, having evolved in our (sometimes) harsh and unpredictable climate. They thrive on the soils that occur here and on the specific nutrients those soils provide. Native plants also tend to be more resistant to pest pressures of native insects and diseases common to North Texas. A plant might be native to:

- Texas
- North Texas
- Your County
- Your City

Adapted plants are also hardy but have been introduced to Texas landscapes through the horticulture industry. Most often, they originate from areas with similar soil types, climates and/or hardness zones.

Remember, even thought a plant is native to Texas, it is important to make sure it is well adapted to our area. i.e. A plant Native to Corpus Christi may not feel so at home in Dallas.

There are also many plants available that have native parents, but have been bred for improved ornamental characteristics.

Texas Plant Hardiness Zones

Adapted from USDA national plant hardiness zone map

Top 100 List

Flip to the back of your booklet for a list of our 100 favorite native and adapted plants for North Texas!

North Texas Zone 8a

Avg. Low Temp. 10-15 °F
Record Low -8°F 1980
Record High 113°F 1980
Avg. First Freeze Nov. 22
Avg. Last Freeze March 13
Avg. Yearly Rainfall 40.55”
(Can range from 20”-50”)

Common Soils

Poor draining clays & lay loams, mostly alkaline, pH 7.5 to 7.8
Sandy loams and sandy soils can also be present.
A number of amendments can be added to your soil to ensure the richest growing environment for your plants. Soil amendments can improve a number of planting bed characteristics like drainage, soil fertility and pH levels. Two of the most common and helpful amendments for improving North Texas soils are compost and expanded shale.

**Compost** is a nutrient rich soil conditioner consisting of broken down organic material. Incorporate or top-dress ½” to 2” of compost into the soil to improve drainage while maintaining your soil’s water-holding capacity. Compost:

- Improves soil texture
- Contains macro and micronutrients
- Neutralizes pH
- Increases water holding capacity
- Reduces water evaporation

**Expanded Shale** is a porous, lightweight aggregate with the ability to improve drainage in clay soils and hold moisture at the same time. Expanded shale is most effective as incorporated into soil when establishing a new planting bed. Add up to 3” then till or mix in thoroughly to a depth of 6” with a shovel or spade.

**Don’t Guess, Soil Test!**

One of the best methods for evaluating your soil is to collect and mail a soil sample to the Texas A&M Soil Testing Laboratory. Step-by-step instructions for submitting your sample are available at http://soiltesting.tamu.edu. For as little as $10 per sample, you will receive a detailed analysis of your soil and recommendations on how you can improve soil fertility.

**Planting**

**Spacing and Placement: “Right Plant, Right place”**

A healthy native or adapted plant is a valuable asset, but to ensure the best success, it needs to be planted properly and in the right place, depending on its specific requirements. Read your plant’s tag and pay close attention to its hardiness zone, light requirements, size and spacing. Pay special attention to sunlight obstructions such as trees, buildings, fences and other plants in your landscape, and consider how shade conditions change with the sun’s position at different times of the year.

**The sun's position in the sky at noon during in each season**

- **Summer**
- **Spring & Fall**
- **Winter**

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**soiltesting.tamu.edu**

Soiltesting.tamu.edu is your one-stop shop for everything you need to get your soil sample submitted to Texas A&M AgriLife scientists for testing.
**Proper Planting**

Whether you’re planting a native or adapted tree, shrub, or herbaceous perennial, it is key to make the transition from the nursery to your landscape as easy as possible and to employ the best planting practices to ensure a long, healthy life for your plant.

**Planting Width** should be 2 to 3 times as wide as root mass. **Planting Depth** should be no deeper than root mass.

Dont break the root ball! Unwrap circling or girdling roots.

**Planting a Tree**

Avoid planting your tree in the hottest summer months. For best results, plant when the tree is dormant.

The top of the tree’s root mass should be at or slightly above the existing grade (dotted line.)

Mulch between 2” and 4” deep but be sure to leave a 1” to 2” clearance between the tree trunk and your mulch.

Backfill with native soil from the new hole.

Carefully remove containers, wrappings, wires and ties from root mass before planting. Unwrap any circling roots.

**Mulching**

Applying mulch around your planted areas is crucial to a successful garden. A number of natural materials work well as mulch. Hardwood, cedar, cypress and pine straw mulches are all strong options. Water University recommends between 2” and 4” of mulch for most applications. Be sure to taper off near plant bases to avoid fungal problems and other pest issues.

The benefits of mulching are many; they include:

- Increased water absorbing capacity
- Increased water holding capacity
- Reduced water evaporation
- Reduced erosion
- Weed control
- Soil temperature moderation
- Increased soil nutrition as mulch breaks down
Proper maintenance is one of the most important components of a beautiful and healthy, water efficient landscape. A good design is the first step along your road to success. It is important to design your landscape in a way that does not exceed your maintenance capabilities. A well designed landscape filled with native and adapted plants, trees, shrubs and turfgrasses will provide you with lots of enjoyment and will require minimal need for upkeep labor throughout the year.

WaterUniversity.TAMU.edu

Visit our searchable “Plants of North Texas” database for information on the care and characteristics of more than 200 North Texas plants, including Texas A&M AgriLife Water University’s top 100 list, found on the back cover of this booklet.

Landscape Rule of Thirds

When designing your landscape, utilize the “rule of thirds” by planting 1/3 drought tolerant turfgrass, 1/3 native and adapted planting beds and 1/3 pervious hardscape. This will give your landscape more visual appeal, usable space and a reduction in water use requirements.

Irrigation

Drip, multi-stream rotor sprinkler and soaker hoses help save water, money and, if maintained properly, can be an incredible asset. Adjust controllers as needed to avoid over watering and monitor your system regularly to check for leaks.

Mulching

Maintain 2” - 4” of mulch by adding new mulch annually as needed. This will help you save water and control weeds in your native and adapted planting bed. Keep in mind the array of other benefits your mulch will bring as it breaks down and enriches the existing soil.

Pruning

Remove dead material from your plants as needed. This will make way for lush new growth and also help you to maintain the shape of your trees and shrubs for aesthetic appeal.

Mowing

Remove no more than 1/3 of the length of your lawn (leaf blade) each time you mow. This will help keep your turfgrass healthy. Remember, a big lawn translates to more mowing, so follow the landscaping rule of thirds. Always use your clippings as mulch.

Don't bag it! Mulch it!
Water University’s Top 100 Native and Adapted Plants for North Texas

**Native and Adapted Plant Characteristics**
- Native and Adapted Plants are
  - Drought Tolerant
  - Heat Tolerant
  - And they typically require
  - Less Water
  - Less Fertilizer
  - Fewer Pesticides

### Shade Trees
- Shantung Maple
- Eldarica Pine
- Red Oak
- Bur Oak
- Chinquapin Oak
- Live Oak
- Cedar Elm
- Lacebark Elm

### Perennials
- Flame Acanthus
- Texas Gold Columbine
- Damianita
- Coreopsis
- Cone Flower
- Mist Flower
- Gaura
- Texas Star Hibiscus
- Anne Marie Lantana
- Texas Lantana
- New Gold Lantana
- Turk’s Cap
- Blackfoot Daisy
- Rock Rose
- Jerusalem Sage
- Garden Phlox
- Rudbeckia
- Henry Duelberg Mealy Cup Sage
- Black and Blue Salvia
- Mexican Bush Sage
- Lyre Leaf Sage
- Hot Lips Salvia
- Skullcap
- Lamb’s Ear
- Fall Aster
- Society Garlic
- Zexmenia

### Ornamental Trees
- Red Buckeye
- Redbud—Many Varieties
- Desert Willow
- Smoketree
- Possumhaw Holly
- Yaupon Holly
- Wichita Blue Juniper
- Deciduous Magnolia
- Wax Myrtle
- Cherry Laurel
- Eve’s Necklace
- Texas Mountain Laurel
- Vitex

### Vines
- Cross Vine
- Coral Honeysuckle
- Chinese Wisteria

### Ornamental Grasses
- Berkeley Sedge
- Inland Sea Oats
- Maiden Grass
- Zebra Grass
- Gulf Muhly
- White Cloud Muhly
- Mexican Feather Grass
- Dwarf Hameln Grass
- Moudry Grass
- Little Bluestem
- Indian grass

### Shrubs
- Glossy Abelia
- Kaleidoscope Abelia
- Rose Creek Abelia
- Butterfly Bush
- Beauty Berry
- False Aralia
- Althea/Rose of Sharon
- Oakleaf Hydrangea
- St. John’s Wort
- Dwarf Yaupon Holly
- Andorra Juniper
- Texas Sage
- Dwarf Wax Myrtle
- Rosemary
- Autumn sage
- Bridal Wreath Spirea
- Anthony Waterer Spirea
- Limmound Spirea
- Bush Germander
- Eastern Snowball Viburnum
- Rusty Blackhawk Viburnum

### Turfgrass
- Bermuda
- St. Augustine
- Zoysia
- Buffalo

### Palms
- Dwarf Palmetto
- Windmill Palm

### Yuccas/Cacti
- Soft Leaf Yucca
- Red Yucca
- Color Guard Yucca

### Groundcovers
- Horse Herb
- Snake Herb
- Purple Wintercreeper
- Frog Fruit
- Gray Santolina

### Ferns
- Wavy Cloak Fern
- Holly Fern
- Southern Wood Fern

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Developed in cooperation with the Water Efficiency Network of North Texas