

NATIVE LANDSCAPING TEMPLATES

For the Hill Country

A Tool for Designing
Water-Wise Yards



INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

Across the Texas Hill Country, our landscapes are changing. Population growth means new homes are being built every day, often with large expanses of turf lawns. Traditional turf lawns, while familiar, require significant irrigation, especially during the hottest months when water supplies are most strained. In fact, **outdoor watering is the single largest use of water for most Hill Country households, making landscaping the biggest opportunity for meaningful conservation in our region.**

In 2025, the Hill Country Alliance released [Model Language for HOAs in the Texas Hill Country](#) with the goal of helping residential landscaping shift away from water-hungry turf lawns towards drought-tolerant native landscaping. Native landscapes are uniquely suited to the Hill Country's climate and soils. They require less water once established, support pollinators and wildlife, improve soil health, and reduce long-term maintenance needs. Just as importantly, they can be designed to reflect the natural beauty and character of this region—spaces that feel connected to place, resilient over time, and vibrant in every season.

Through subsequent conversations about the HOA guide, we learned that many homeowners were interested in transitioning to more native, water-wise landscapes, but didn't know where to begin. It can be difficult to visualize what a yard with less turf and more native plants might look like, or how to design a space that still feels welcoming, functional, and beautiful. **In partnership with the Native Plant Society of Texas, Native American Seed, San Antonio Water System, and a landscape architect, we created these templates to help bridge that gap—offering simple, scalable examples that show what's possible.** By providing clear starting points for common yard sizes, we hope to remove a key barrier—uncertainty—and empower more homeowners and communities to embrace landscapes that conserve water and protect our natural resources.

In Partnership,



Photo credits (cover and page 1):
San Antonio Water System

GETTING STARTED

1

Pick a template: Choose the lot size that is closest to your own as a starting point.

2

Choose a place to start: Is there a particular corner of your yard you'd like to update? Maybe it's your front landscaping beds, or side yard?

3

Understand your site: Does it get a lot of sun or shade? Is it in an area of the yard that has good drainage? What existing plants do you want to maintain? Do you have areas with steep slopes that may need special attention for erosion management?

4

Choose your plants: Once you have chosen a place to start and understand your site, it's time to select your plants! Two good resources that can help you pick your plant palette are the Native Plant Database and the Eco-Region Plant Selection Tool (listed in the Resources section on page 7). Both of these resources let you filter by ecoregion, plant type (e.g. shrub, tree, etc.), and sun/shade tolerance. Check out page 3 for more tips and information on choosing your plants.

5

Find support: The Native Plant Society of Texas offers a [Native Landscaping Certification Program](#) for those that would like to learn more about how to landscape their yards, and a volunteer-led [Pollinator Garden Assistance and Recognition Program](#). For those seeking help from a professional who is knowledgeable about Texas native plants, check out the [Service Provider Directory](#).

Lighting Tip

Keeping lights pointed downward and on only when they are needed will help your plants, too! They are evolved for dark nights, just like the rest of us.

A Note on Irrigation

If you're thinking about converting your lawn to a native landscape, it may be a good time to rethink your irrigation system. If you are using native plants and you are planting them at the right time of year, you may be able to do away entirely with in-ground irrigation. The savings can be great for both your water use and your bill. Check with your water provider to see if they offer irrigation rebates!



CHOOSING YOUR PLANTS

LEGEND



Canopy Trees



Understory Trees



Shrubs (width 6', 4', 3')



Perennials (width 4', 3', 2')



Groundcovers (width 3', 2')



Vines (width 3', 2')



Firewise Line



Grass



Gravel



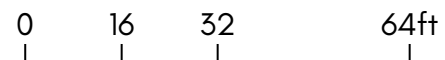
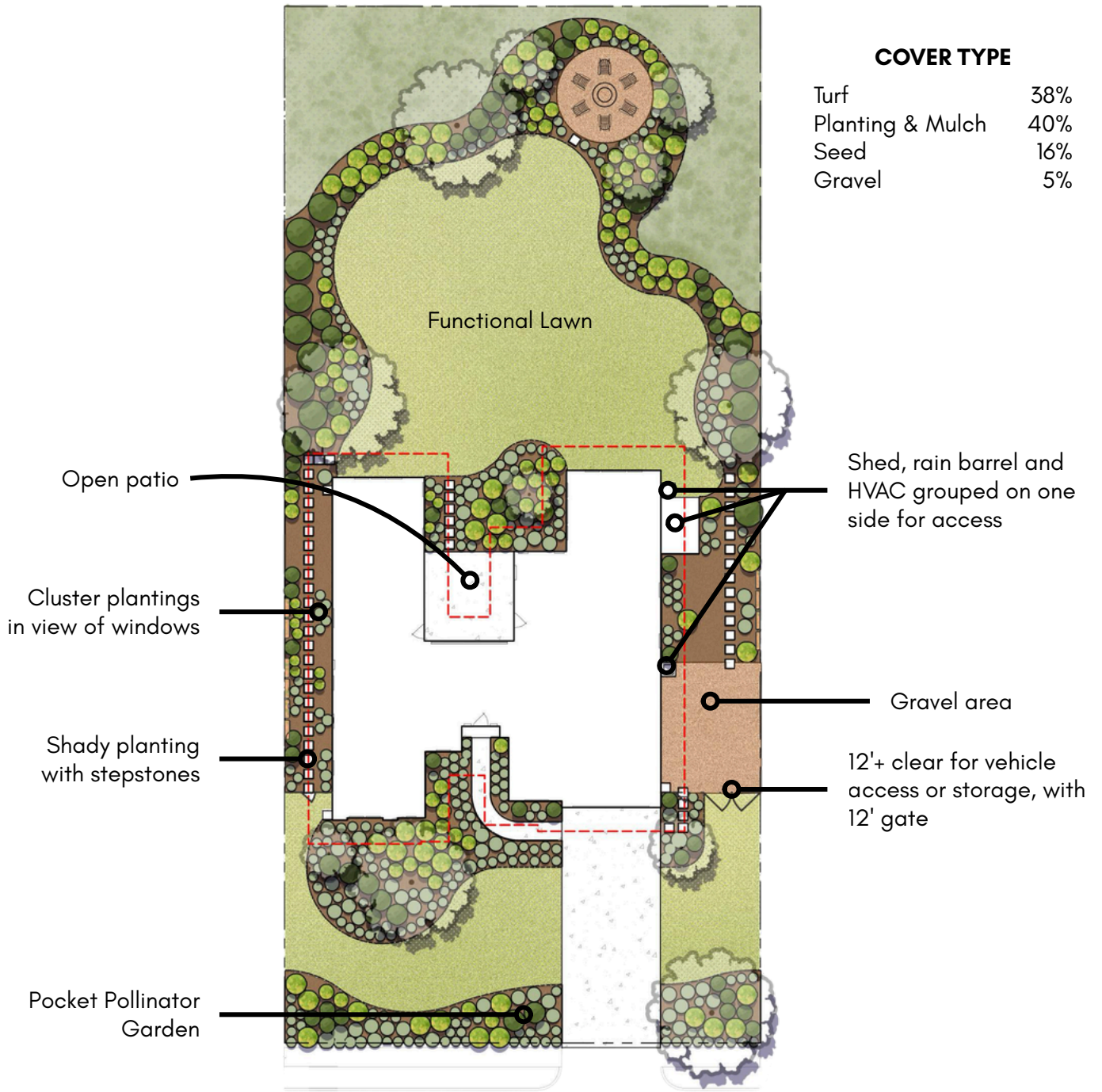
Mulch



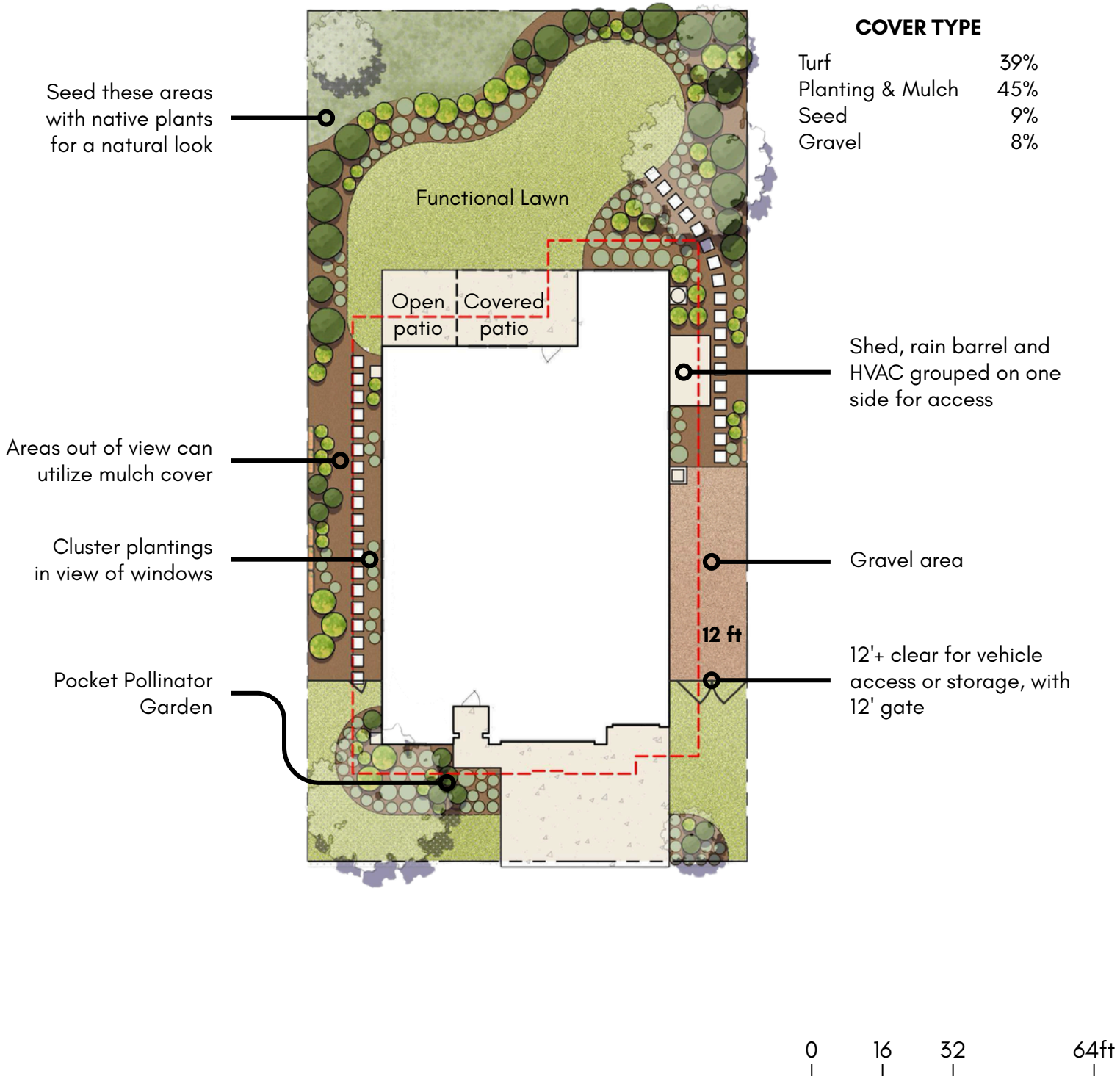
Seed

- Choose plants that are native to your ecoregion. This means that they are best suited to your local soils, temperatures, and rainfall amounts. [You can find your local ecoregion here.](#)
- Match types and sizes to your specific site conditions and end goals. For example, use taller and larger plants where privacy is preferable— or prioritize variety in areas that are in view from nearby paving and windows. If deer browse is a challenge in your area, consider [plants that are deer resistant.](#)
- Determine the total hours of direct sunlight the area receives daily and choose plants accordingly: Less than 4 hours = full shade, 4–6 hours = part shade / part sun, more than 6 hours = full sun.
- Mix species to increase visual variety and to increase months out of the year when something will be blooming, offering more support to pollinators. Include evergreens for winter interest.
- Space plants according to their mature size, not the size they are when you bring them home from the nursery. Many native plants can grow large, but take a few years to reach their full size.
- The red-dashed areas around the house indicate a 5-foot buffer where plants should be chosen for fire resistance: either short, spaced apart, low in essential oils, or consistently watered.
- If choosing a *spreading* groundcover, follow the spacing and counts shown on the plans. If choosing a more *compact* groundcover, double your number of plants for the area.
- Vines are shown along some fences to provide vertical interest from nearby windows. Species vary in climbing habit, either by clinging, tendrils or twining, so consider the fence material when choosing a vine.
- Shade trees benefit us everywhere, but shade trees planted on the west side of the house will provide the greatest heat mitigation effects. If this is an important consideration for you, double-check your compass when planting.
- If drainage patterns allow, consider a rain garden in low areas 10 feet or farther away from the building foundation. These plantings are practical as well as ornamental, attracting runoff and absorbing it into the soil. For more information, visit [Garden Style San Antonio's Rain Garden page.](#)

0.5 ACRE LANDSCAPE TEMPLATE



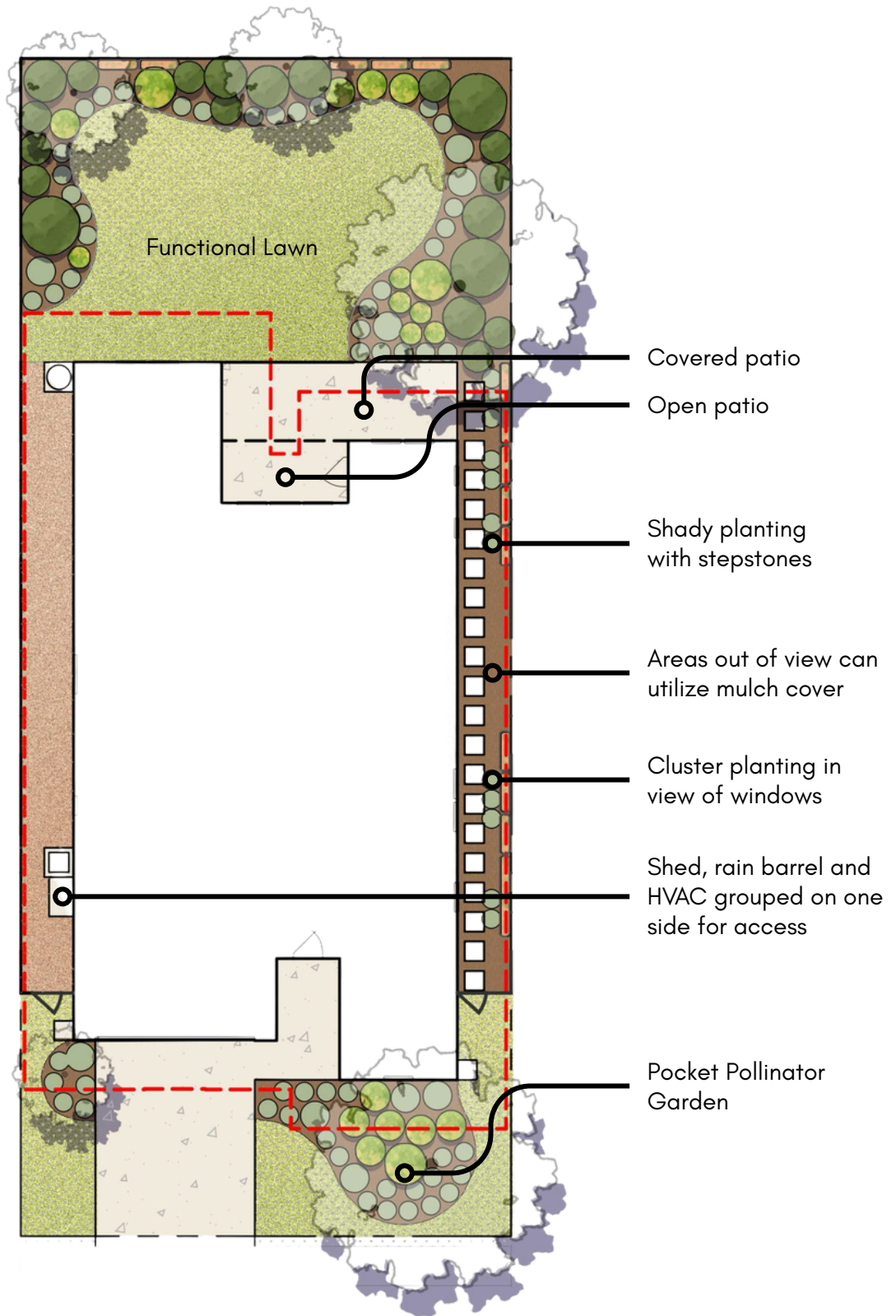
0.25 ACRE LANDSCAPE TEMPLATE



6000 SQ. FT. LANDSCAPE TEMPLATE

COVER TYPE

Turf	44%
Planting & Mulch	44%
Seed	0%
Gravel	12%



0 16 32 64ft

RESOURCES

Explore additional resources to help you get started on designing your water-wise yard.



HOA GUIDE

Source: Hill Country Alliance

A practical guide for protecting and preserving water resources, native landscapes, and night skies through your HOA CC&Rs and Landscape Guidelines.



ECO-REGION PLANT SELECTOR TOOL

Source: Native American Seed

Find the right seeds based on 9 unique filters, like ecoregion, site conditions, and function. Select your ecoregion at the bottom of the homepage.



NATIVE PLANT DATABASE

Source: Native Plant Society of Texas

Find the perfect Texas native plant for your yard or landscape by searching for plants by various attributes using this database.



GARDENSTYLE SAN ANTONIO

Source: San Antonio Water System

For SAWS customers, this is your resource for inspiring designs, drought-resilient plants, expert advice and incentives to transform your yard into a WaterSaver showpiece.

