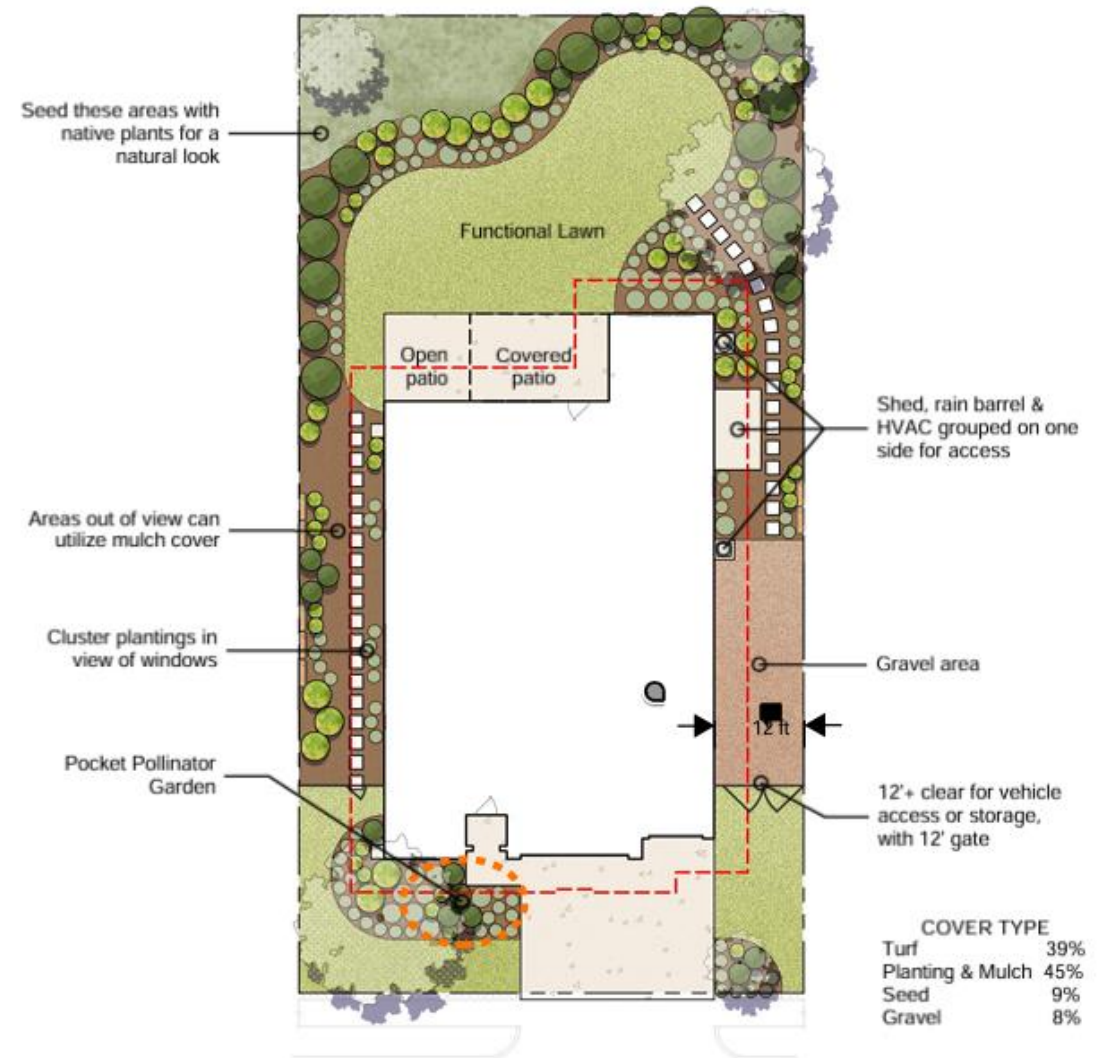


# Native Landscaping Templates for the Hill Country

A New Tool for Designing Water-Wise Yards

Presented by:

Hill Country Alliance, Native Plant Society of Texas, Native American Seed, and San Antonio Water System





## Hill Country Alliance

The Hill Country Alliance (HCA) is a nonprofit organization working to bring together a diverse coalition of partners to preserve the open spaces, starry night skies, clean and abundant waters, and unique character of the Texas Hill Country.

# Our Partners

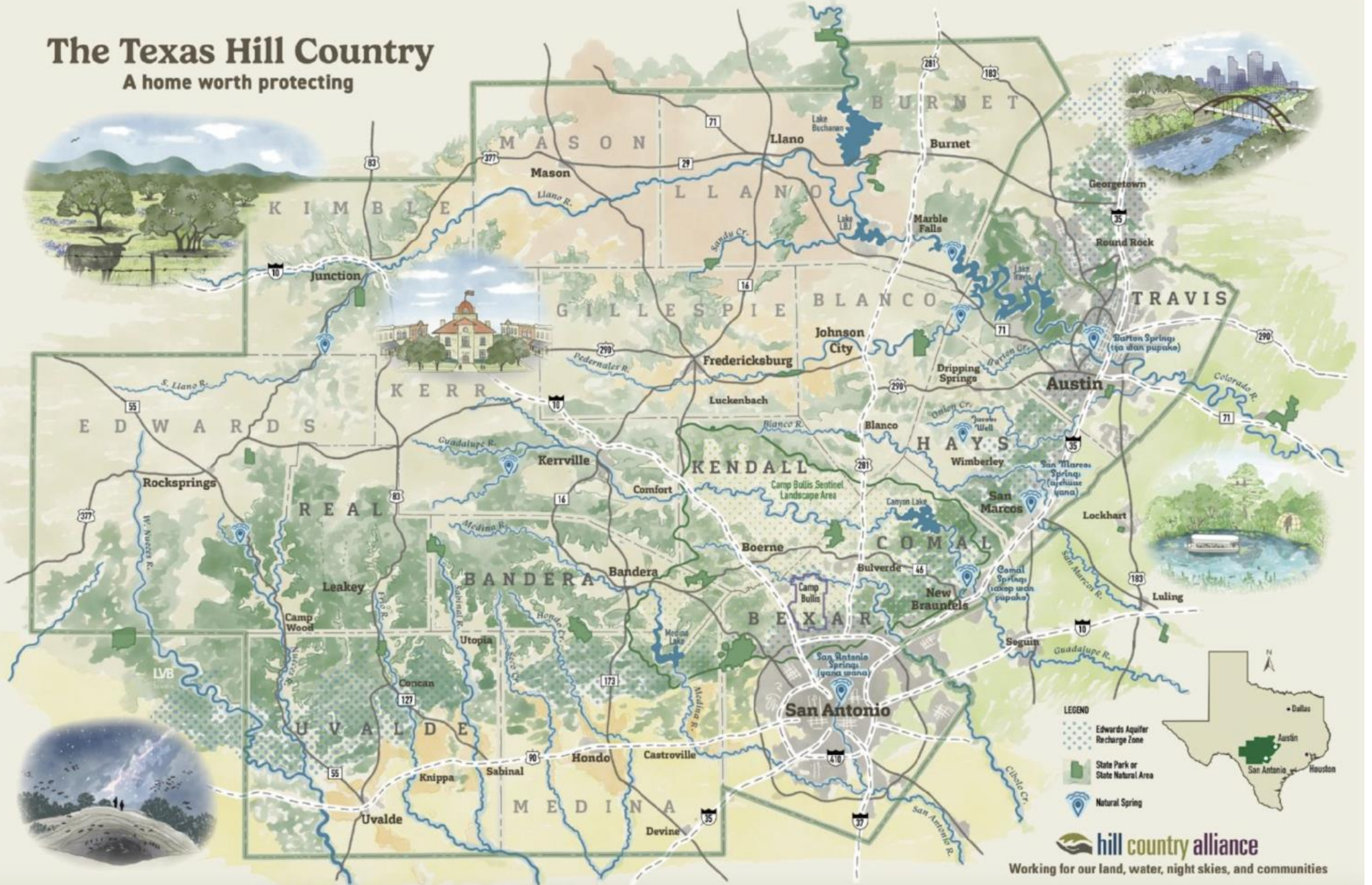


# Agenda

- Background
- Why Native Plants
- Reading the land
- Elements of a successful native landscape
- Getting started with templates
- Additional resources & Q&A

# The Texas Hill Country

A home worth protecting

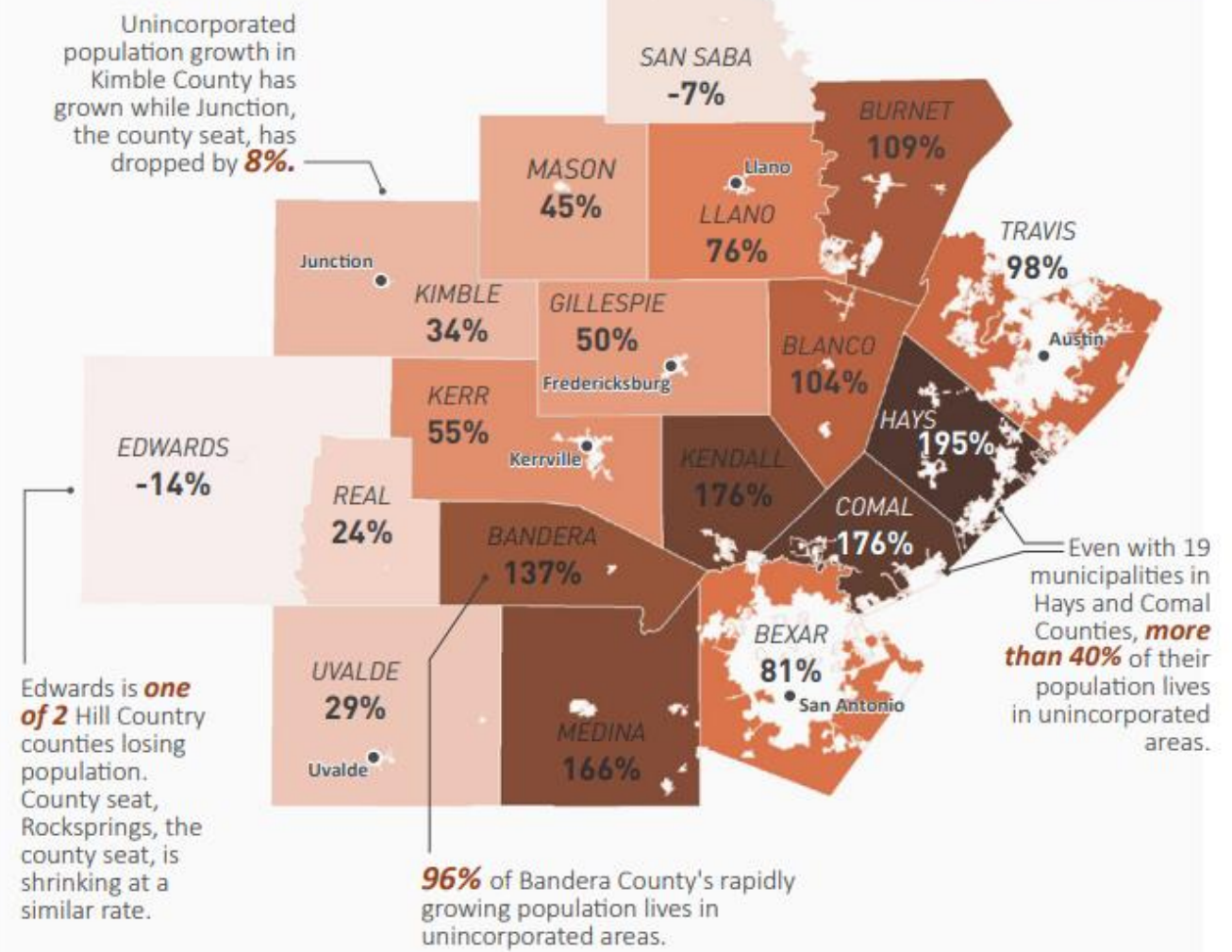


Since 1990, the population of the unincorporated Hill Country has more than doubled.

### POPULATION GROWTH IN UNINCORPORATED AREAS, 1990 - 2020

0 20 mi.

The Hill Country population in unincorporated areas has grown by **103%** since 1990. **Darker shades** indicate faster growth rates by county.



White spaces indicate incorporated areas.



**Lot Type C (refer [Detail Attachment 9](#)):**

- Minimum of 150 square foot mulched landscape bed in the front yard.
- Front yard and rear yard shall be fully sodded, except for landscape bed(s).
- Minimum of fifteen (15) one (1) gallon plants in the front yard.
- Minimum of ten (10) five (5) gallon plants in the front yard.
- Minimum of one (1) fifteen (15) gallon plant in the front yard.
- Minimum of one (1) two inch (2") caliper hardwood Yard Tree.
- Minimum of one (1) three inch (3") caliper hardwood Street Tree in the Lot Front.
- Landscape irrigation system for entire front yard shall be installed.

# Impacts of Landscaping

- Water managers estimate that 60-70% of residential water is used for outdoor irrigation in the summer. Households with automatic irrigation systems use 47% more water than those without.
- Native plants are adapted to our drought cycles and can survive with little water. Native plants provide food and habitat for local wildlife and pollinators. These benefits can be lost when native landscapes are replaced with non-native species and turf grass

# MODEL LANGUAGE FOR HOAs IN THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

A practical guide for protecting and preserving  
water resources, native landscapes, and night skies



## Our Goals

- Make it easier for **new developments** to adopt landscaping policies that conserve water and promote native plants.
- Help **established HOAs** adopt water-wise landscaping guidelines

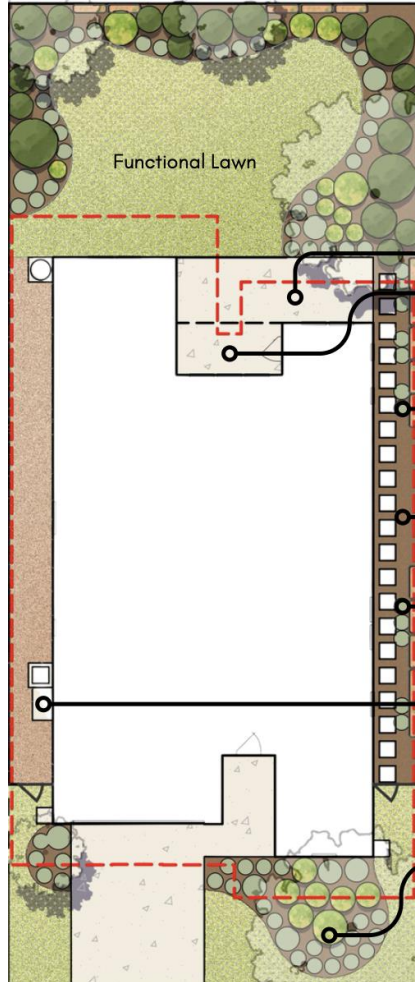
# Landscape Guidelines at a Glance

- Plant and turf species must be native or drought-tolerant
- No more than 50% non-native turf
- Rainwater harvesting is encouraged with minimal requirements
- Minimum mowing heights are 3 inches , preference for 4 inches
- Automatic irrigation is discouraged but allowed, and irrigation best practices like hydrozoning are promoted
- Landscapes composed of majority rock or boulders will not be allowed

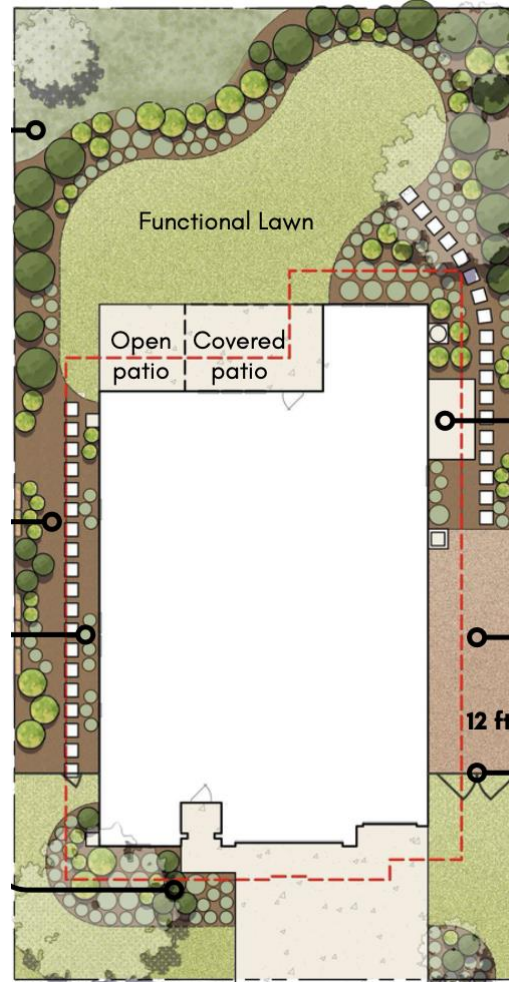
How do we make it easier for developers and homeowners to envision landscapes in line with our Hill Country Landscaping Guidelines?

# New Templates

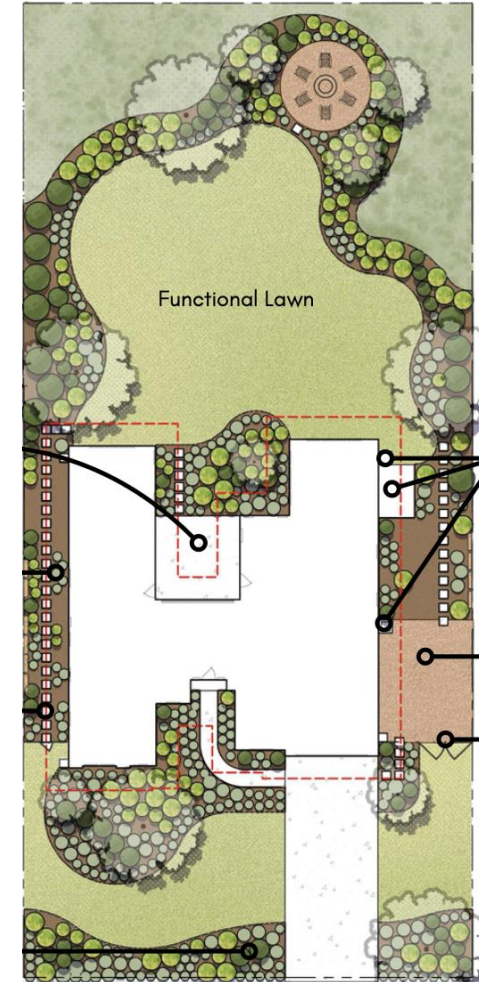
6000 SQ. FT.



.25 ACRE



.5 ACRE





*...helping people restore the earth*

**seedsources.com** solutions for eco-logical management

8875 I-35 New Braunfels, TX 78130 800.723.4043 325.446.4537 fax

**Weston Neiman**

**weston@seedsources.com**



# Why Native Landscapes?

“We cannot solve today’s problems with the same thinking we used to create them”

-Albert Einstein



# Why Not *Conventional* Landscapes?

“Invert,  
always invert”

-Charlie Munger



# Keepin' up with the Joneses


Fuel



**1.2 BILLION** gallons of fuel  
burned in US each year

# Keepin' up with the Joneses

Fuel  
Time

Warm Season Grasses Lawn Care Schedule	WINTER			SPRING			SUMMER			FALL		
TREATMENT APPLICATIONS												
Pre-Emergents												
Post-Emergents												
Fertilization												
Insecticides												
Grub Preventative												
Fungicides												
Iron <sup>+</sup>												
pH - Lime/Sulfur <sup>+</sup>												
LAWN MAINTENANCE												
Soil Testing*												
Watering												
Mowing												
Dethatching												
Aeration												
Seeding												
	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV

80+ Hours of Work per Yard Every Year

# Keepin' up with the Joneses

Fuel  
Time  
Money



Over \$1,000 Spent Each Year

# Keepin' up with the Joneses

Fuel

Time

Money

**Air Pollution**



**5% of all US Air Pollution**

# Keepin' up with the Joneses

Fuel  
Time  
Money  
Air Pollution  
**Contamination**



**50%+ of Urban Water Pollution**

# Keepin' up with the Joneses

Fuel

Time

Money

Air Pollution

Contamination

**Water**



**60% of Home Use Goes to Irrigation**

# The real cost of keepin' up with the Joneses



Hill Country Courthouse  
drought of August, 2011

# Native Landscapes Give Back

“To take care of the land is to take care of ourselves”

-Wendell Berry



# Native Landscapes Give Back

Resilience



Native Sons Gardens

Adapted with Local Climate, Soil & Rainfall

# Native Landscapes Give Back

Resilience  
**Carbon**



Stores up to **3x More Carbon** in Soil than  
Turfgrass

# Native Landscapes Give Back

Resilience  
Carbon  
**Inputs**



**No Fertilizer or Pesticides Needed**

# Native Landscapes Give Back

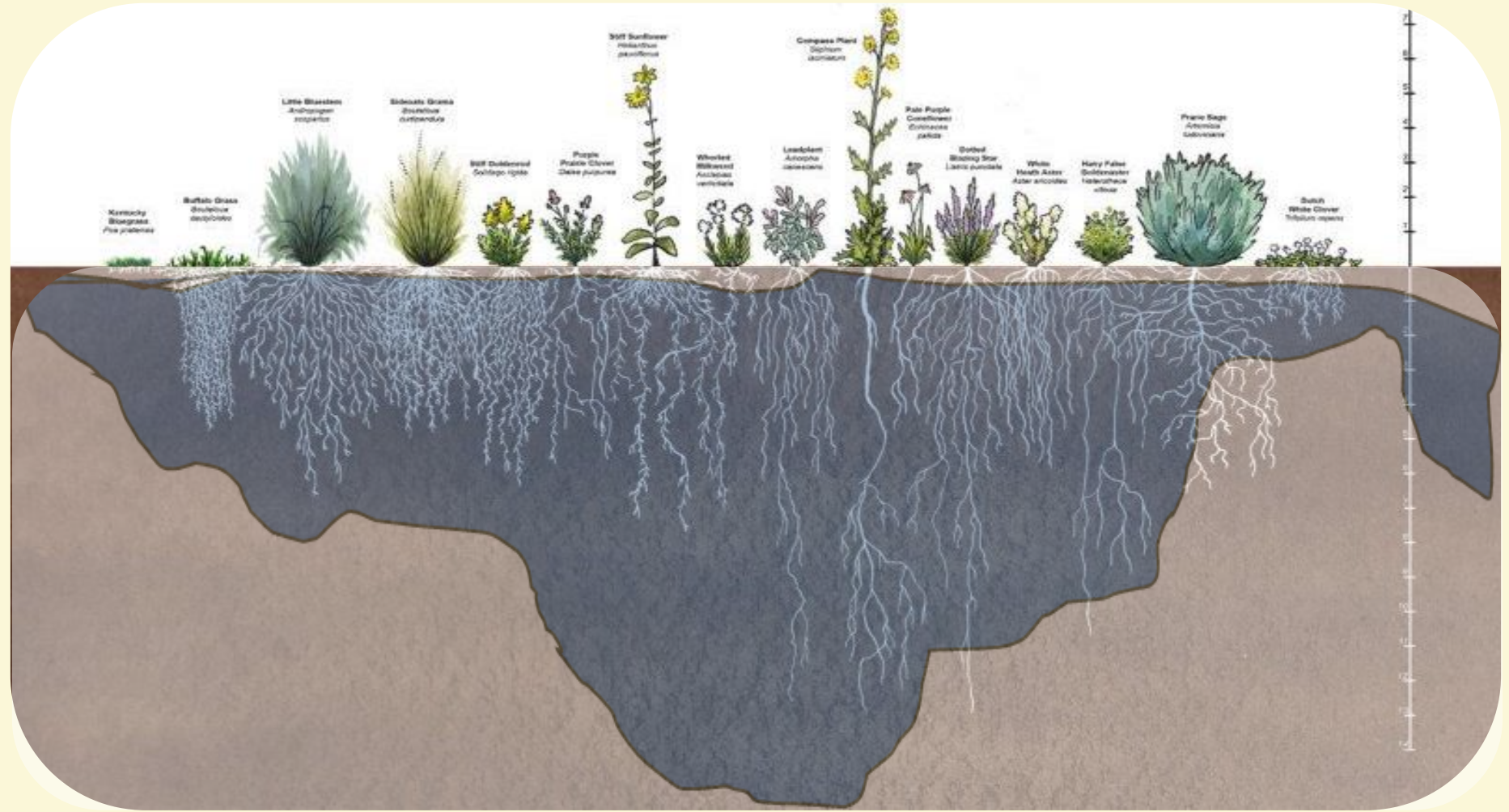
Resilience  
Carbon  
Inputs  
**Maintenance**



**Slower Growing & Less Mowing**

# Native Landscapes Give Back

Resilience  
Carbon  
Inputs  
Maintenance  
**Water**



Up to 4x Higher Infiltration than Turfgrass Alone

# Native Landscapes Give Back

Resilience

Carbon

Inputs

Maintenance

Water

**Pollinators**



**Co-Evolved & Specialized with Native Plants**

# Native Landscapes Give Back

Resilience  
Carbon  
Inputs  
Maintenance  
Water  
Pollinators

**Wildlife**



**75% More Insect Biomass to Support Native Birds**

# Reading the Land

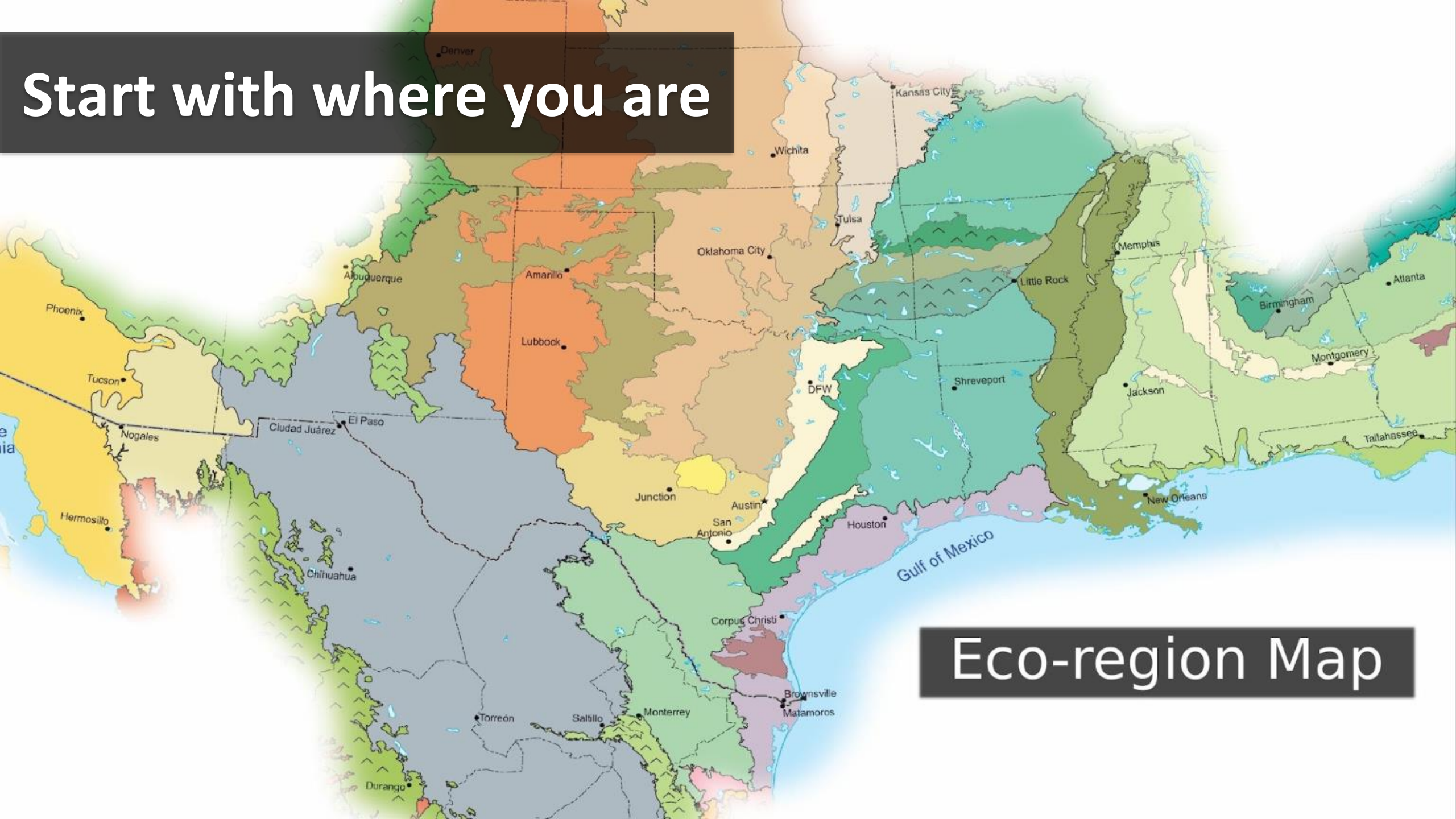
“When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect “

-Aldo

Leopold



Start with where you are



Eco-region Map

Start with where you are



# Reading the Land

## Four Flows of Every Site

### Hydrology



How water moves across the site

# Reading the Land

## Four Flows of Every Site

Hydrology  
Erosion



How land moves across the site

# Reading the Land

## Four Flows of Every Site

Hydrology

Erosion

**Sun/Shade**



How energy moves across the site

# Reading the Land

## Four Flows of Every Site

Hydrology

Erosion

Sun/Shade

**Hardscape**



How people move across the site

# Read the land... then design for it

**Turf** – functional, where needed. 6+ hrs sun best

**Native groundcovers** – functional shady spaces

**Tall plants** – shaded areas, along boundaries, for screening

**Hardscape** – accessibility, lighting, actual use

**Deep-rooted natives** – on slopes and erosion-prone spots

**Rain gardens** – in low spots that already collect water

# Elements of a successful native landscape

Photo Credit: Andrea Polinsky



GARDEN STYLE SAN ANTONIO

# LANDSCAPE CARE GUIDE



**GET INSPIRED**  
Seasonal stars  
to design your  
ideal landscape

**YEAR-ROUND CARE  
CHECKLISTS**  
Monthly tips to  
simplify maintenance

GARDENSTYLE.SA.COM



## Conservation at San Antonio Water System

- Balancing reasonable regulation, education and incentives to assist customers in drastically reducing water consumption
- Rebates available for efficiency upgrades and removal of existing irrigation systems
- Outdoor programs assist customers with turfgrass removal and conversion to resilient watersaver gardens
- Finding your own landscape style, and enjoying it: [GardenStyleSanAntonio.com](http://GardenStyleSanAntonio.com)



# Functional Turf

What IS the function of turfgrass?

Functional turf doesn't *need* fertilizer, herbicide, and excessive irrigation

Maintaining a tidy border makes it clear your thriving native turfgrass is intentional and not just overgrown.

A photograph of a landscaped garden bed. The bed is filled with a layer of brown mulch. Several plants are visible, including a central bush with green leaves and small yellow flowers. In the background, there are more plants and a stone wall. The overall scene is a well-maintained outdoor space.

# Mulched landscape beds

Mulched landscape beds make up 40% of the landscape or more

Combine different native plants for year-round seasonal color and curb appeal


Include evergreens for winter interest

A photograph of a garden path. The path is made of light-colored stepping stones set in a bed of dark mulch. On either side of the path are lush green plants with small pink flowers. The background is a soft-focus garden with more greenery and flowers.

# Shade Plantings

Sideyards and other areas immediately adjacent the house are often be too dark for functional turfgrass

Mulched landscape beds and stepping stones provide a attractive, low-maintenance solution



# Pocket pollinator gardens

Support local ecosystems, bees, butterflies and hummingbirds

Backbone plants, perennials and annuals

Living color and curb appeal

June 2025



# Canopy trees

Shade is one of your greatest landscape assets

Healthy trees increase your property value and make your yard a more pleasant place to be.

Most good tree care is prevention of problems.




# Understory trees

Provide faster-growing bulk and structure for the landscape while slower-growing shade trees mature

Early blooms, important for pollinators

The Swiss army knife of native landscaping:  
they fulfill many roles

**Elements of a Successful Native Landscape**



# Fire-wise buffers

Separate ignition zones to slow wildfire and lower fire intensity

**Immediate zone:** 0-5 feet from the home exterior (very vulnerable to embers)

**Intermediate zone:** 5-30 feet from the exterior (including fences and decks)

**Extended zone:** 30-100 feet (up to 200 feet)

The image is a composite of two photographs. The top photograph shows a wooden deck with several potted plants and a table set for dining. The bottom photograph shows a wooden deck with a dark lounge chair and a small wooden stool. The background is a lush green garden with trees and a wooden fence.

# Outdoor living areas

Create fuel breaks with walkways, patios, and decks

Avoid using decks and porches for storage; keep them clean of firewood and vegetative debris.

A photograph of an outdoor living area. In the center is a circular fire pit made of grey stones with a black metal mesh cover. Four wooden Adirondack chairs are arranged around the fire pit. The ground is paved with large, irregular grey stones. In the background, there is a wooden bench on a raised concrete platform, a large brown ceramic pot, and some green plants. The overall scene is a well-maintained outdoor space.

# Gravel and hardscape

Outdoor living areas (10-20% of landscape)

Permeable hardscape allows water to infiltrate on-site without running off

Pavers, stepping stones and flagstone for a walkable surface

Not a heat island: pair with plantings in shaded areas

# Rain gardens

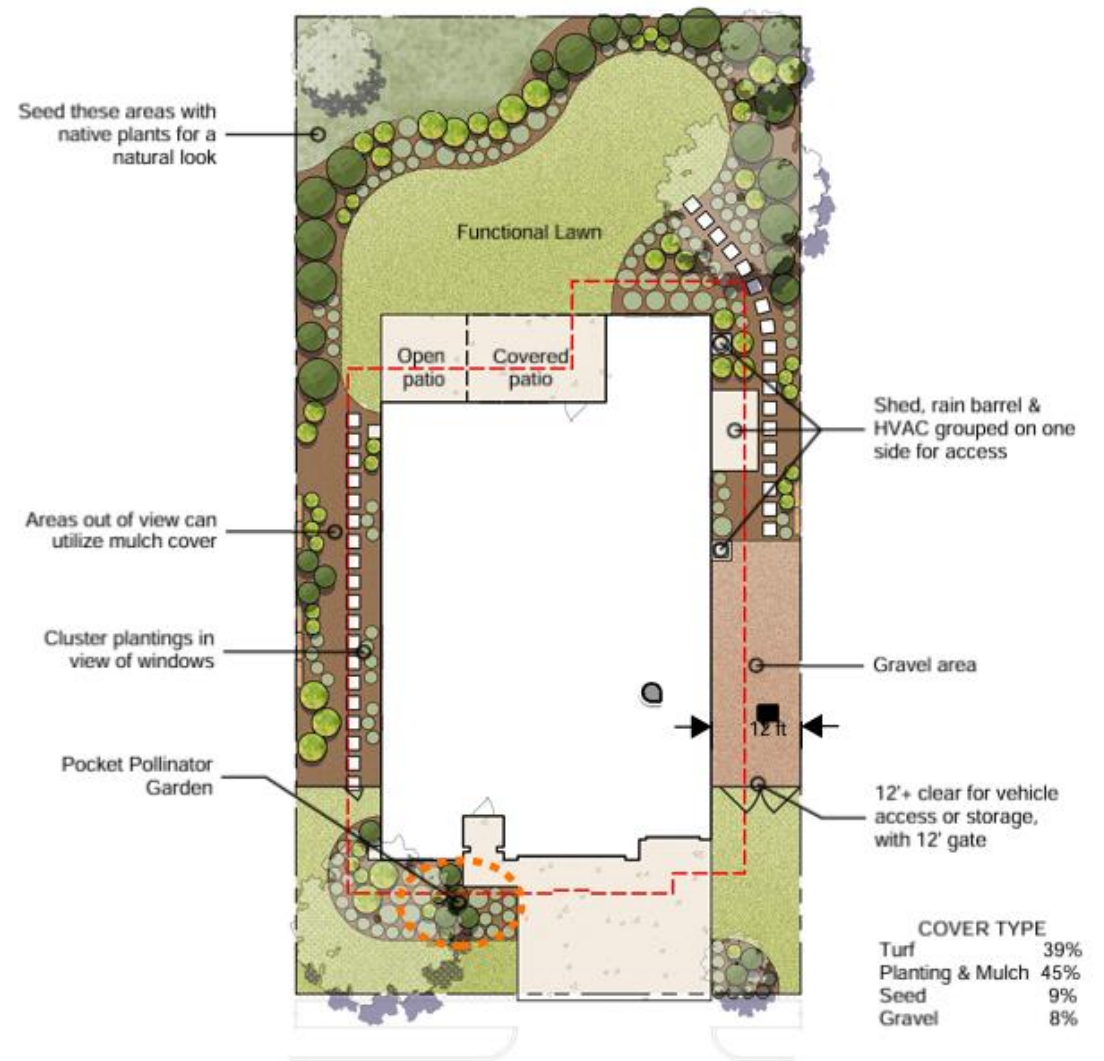
A photograph of a rain garden. The foreground shows dark, rich soil with several clumps of green, grass-like plants. A shovel with a wooden handle and a metal head is stuck upright in the soil. In the background, there are more plants and a blurred view of a house's foundation and a red fire hose.

At least 10 feet from the foundation

Can be a unique situation, but a way to take advantage of a low spot

A good place for facultative wetland plants that can withstand long drought (in Texas, Big Bluestem, Inland Sea Oats, frogfruit, and certain milkweeds)

# Getting started with the templates





# Native Plant Society of Texas

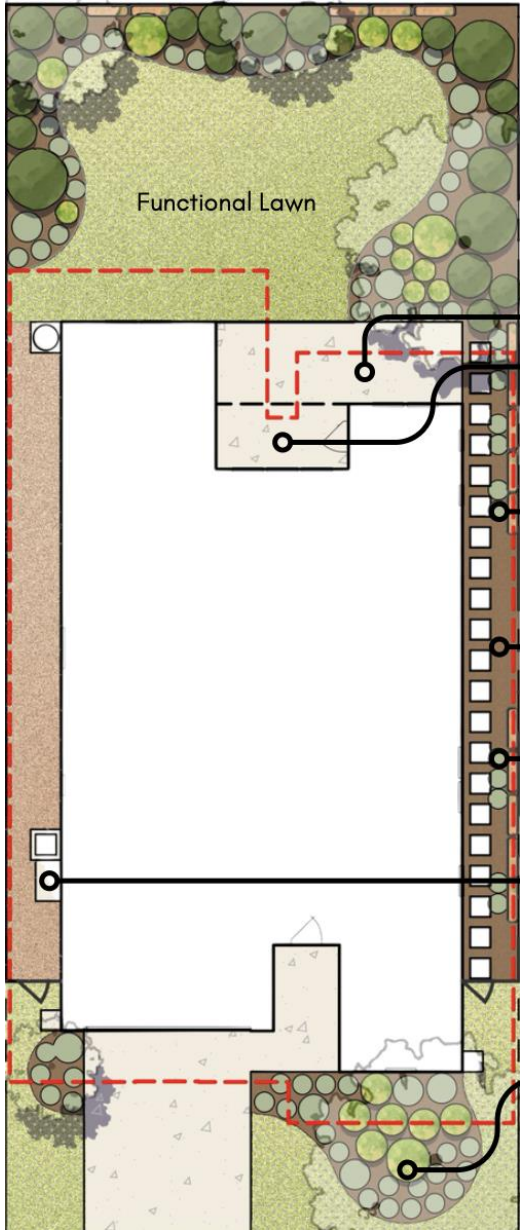
We are a non-profit organization with 6,200 members across 39 chapters.

We want all Texans to value native plants, native habitats, and healthy ecosystems as essential to our quality of life.

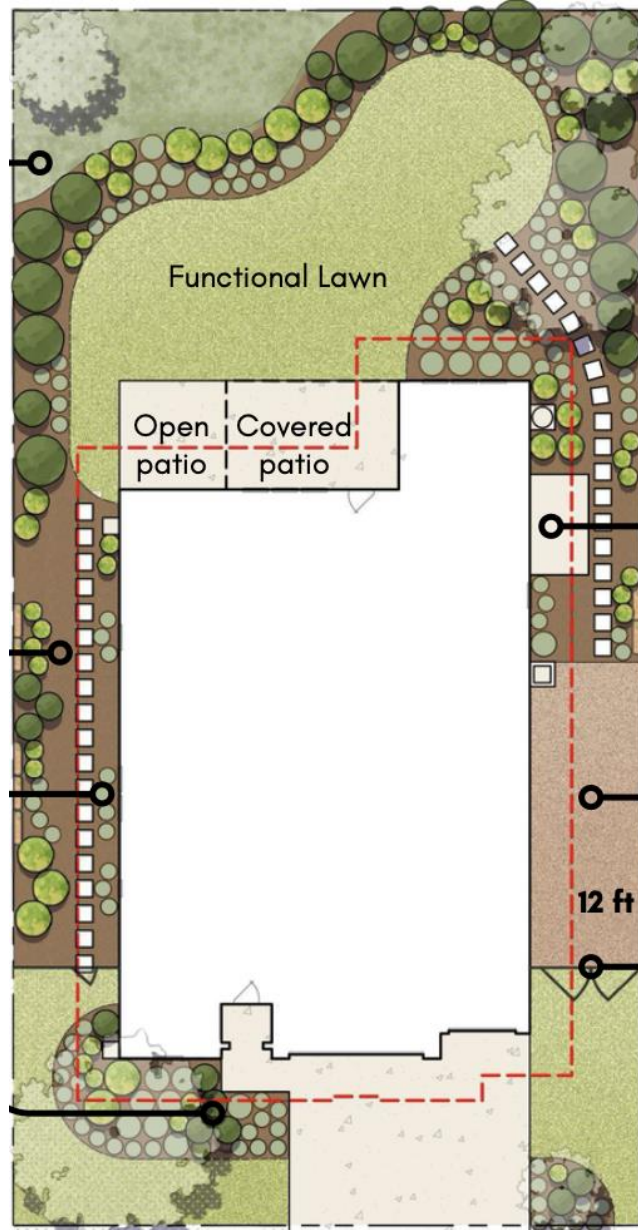


Native  
Plant  
Society  
of Texas

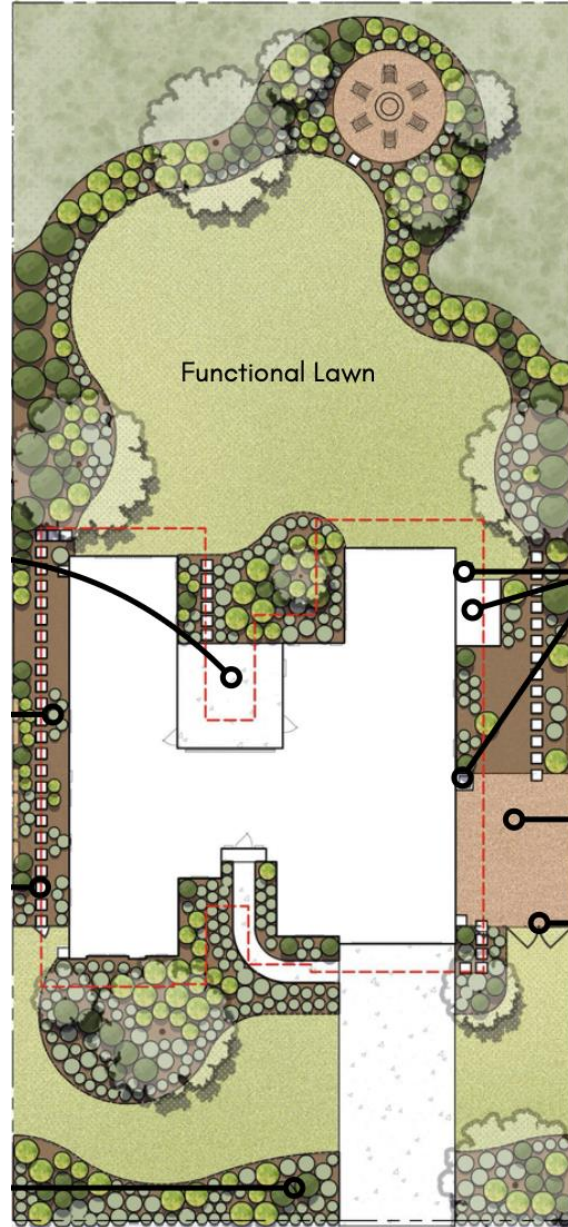
6000 SQ. FT.



.25 ACRE



.5 ACRE



Common property sizes

Designs balance function with aesthetics & cost

- 35-35% turf grass
- 40-45% plantings
- 10-20% gravel, mulch, seeds

Remaining lawn:

- Front: provides continuity with neighbors' lawns
- Back: Area for play

Side yards are prime areas for rain gardens.

# LEGEND



Canopy Trees



Understory Trees



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



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



Groundcovers (width 3', 2')



Vines (width 3', 2')



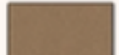
Firewise Line



Grass



Gravel

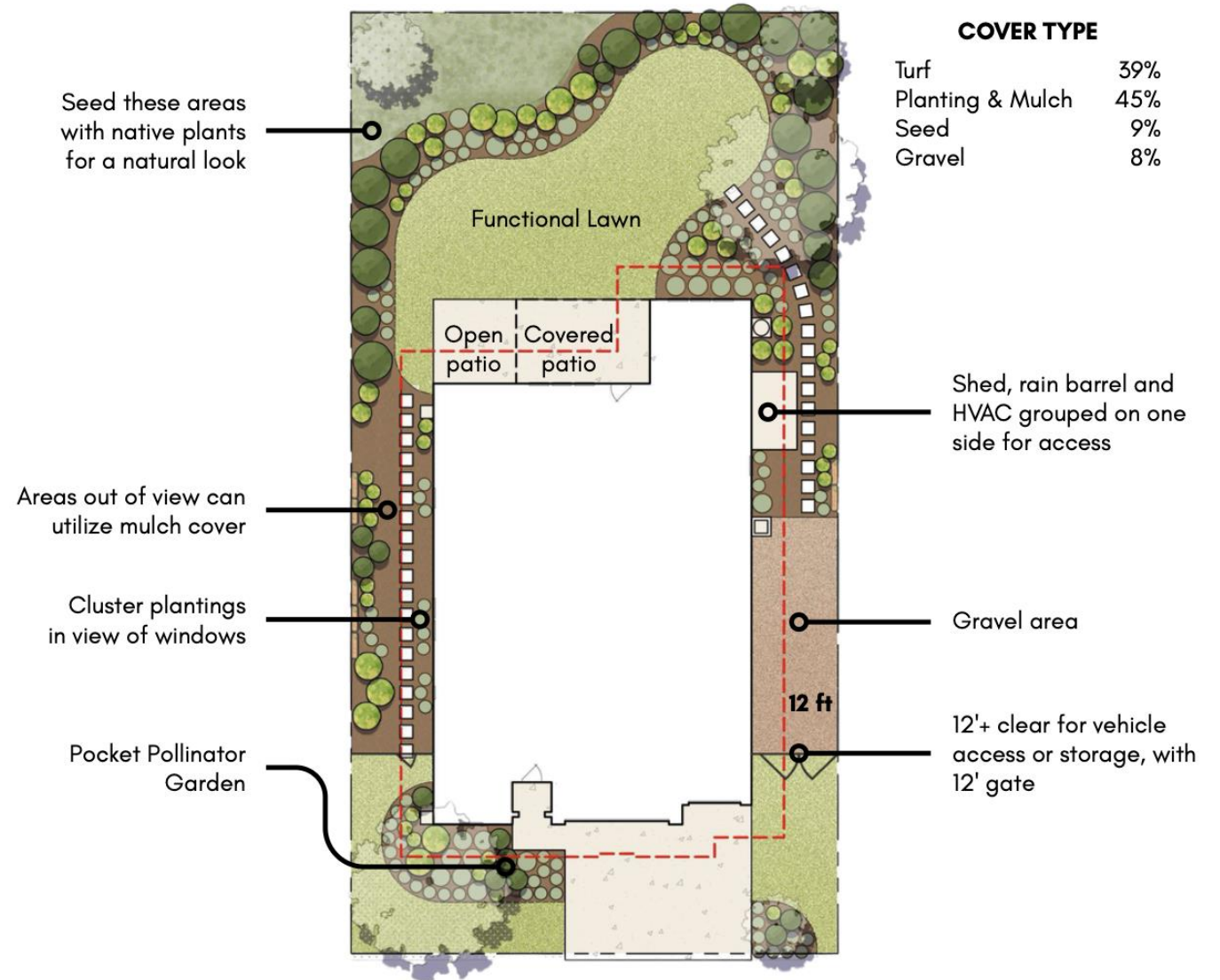


Mulch



Seed

# .25 ACRE



# 1. Choose a place to start

- Choose the best sized template for your property
- Choose a section of your yard to start with.
  - Side yard = low hanging fruit
  - Areas where grass struggles to grow
  - High impact area (view outside windows, curb appeal)

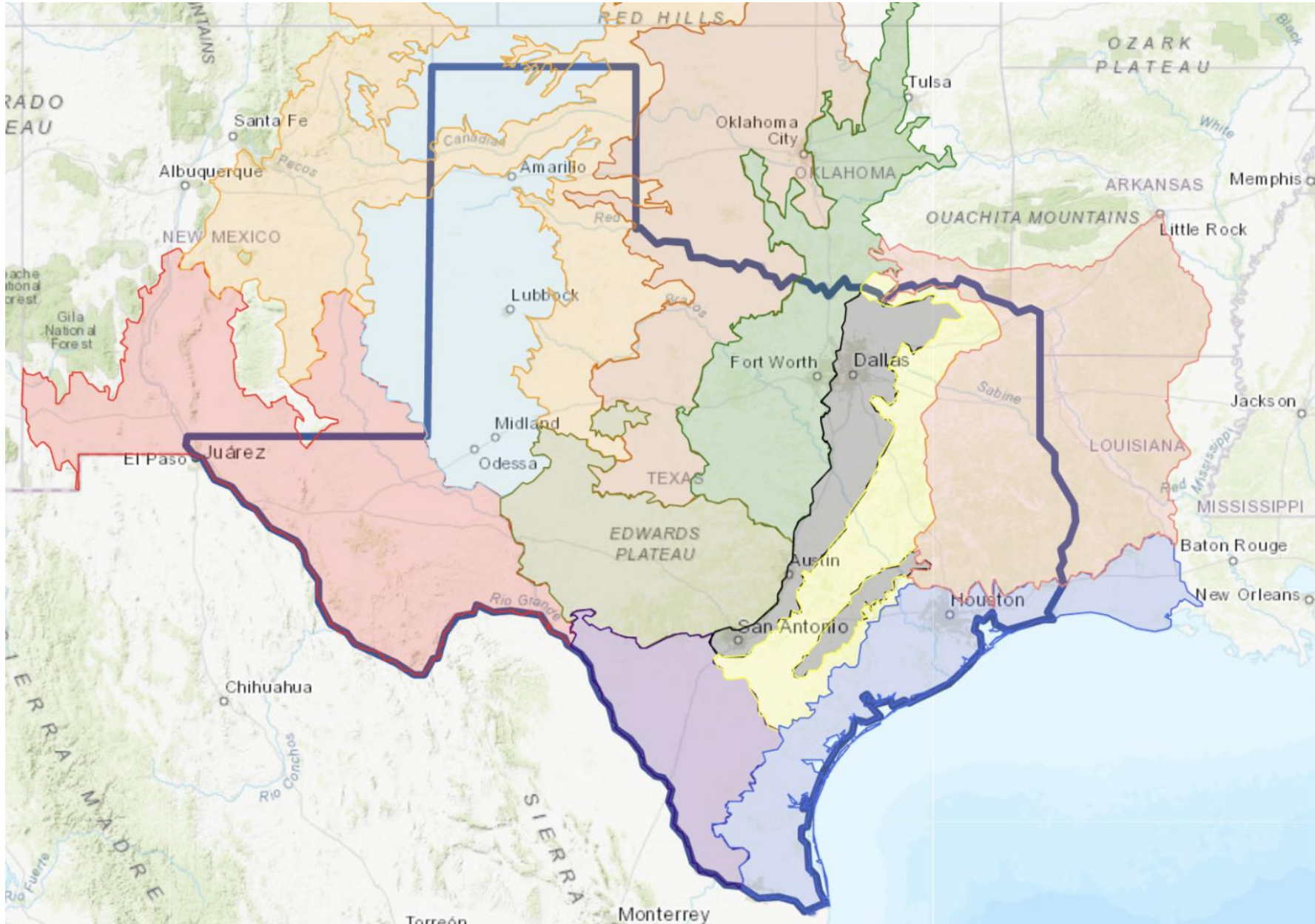


## 2. Create your plant schedule

1. What is your ecoregion?
1. What are your sun conditions?
  - Full sun = 6+ hrs. direct sun
  - Part sun = 4-6 hrs. direct sun
  - Shade = less than 4 hrs. direct sun
1. How much space do you have to work with?
  - Space plants by mature size
  - Repeat plants
1. Sketch out a design before plant shopping



# Texas Ecoregion Map



Ecoregions have similar:

- Soil types
- Rainfall amounts
- Temperature ranges
- Geographic features

Not every plant native to Texas does well in every Texas ecoregion

The Edwards Plateau is the primary ecoregion in the Hill Country area

# NPSOT Native Plant Database



## Native Plant Database

Filter by:

- Ecoregion
- Sun needs
- Soil type
- Evergreen vs. deciduous
- Bloom season
- Bloom color
- Wildlife benefits and more!

Find the Perfect Texas Native Plant for Your Landscape

Use the filters below to search for plants for [your ecoregion](#) and [growing conditions](#). Click on the name of each plant to view more detailed information. This database contains plants readily available at [native plant nurseries](#) in your area. It is not meant to provide an exhaustive list of Texas native plants. If you have a question about the Native Plant Database [send us an email](#).

+ Useful Saved Native Plant Searches

+ Other Native Plant Resources

Heart's Delight  
*Abronia ameliae*



Herbaceous

Prairie Acacia  
*Acacia angustissima*



Herbaceous, Shrub

Southern Sugar Maple  
*Acer floridanum*



Tree

Bigtooth Maple  
*Acer grandidentatum*



Tree

Box Elder  
*Acer negundo*



Drummond Red Maple  
*Acer rubrum var. drummondii*



Common Yarrow  
*Achillea millefolium*



Indian Ricegrass  
*Achnatherum hymenoides*



Search Native Plants

Search all fields...

SUBMIT

Plant Family

All Families

Max Height (ft)

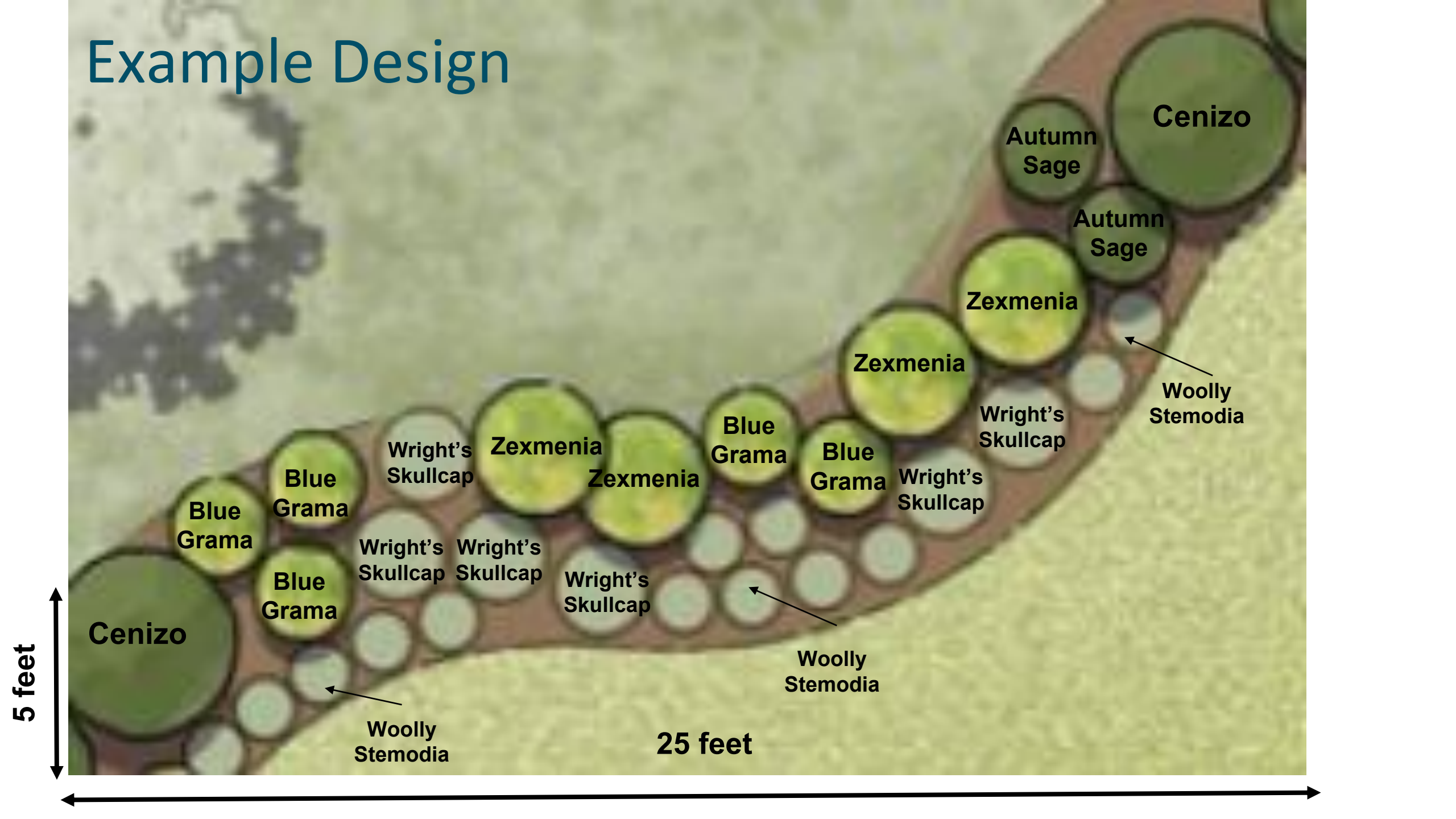
0.0

120.0

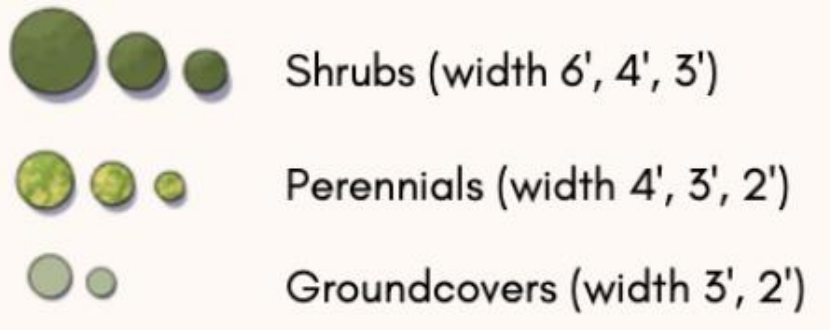
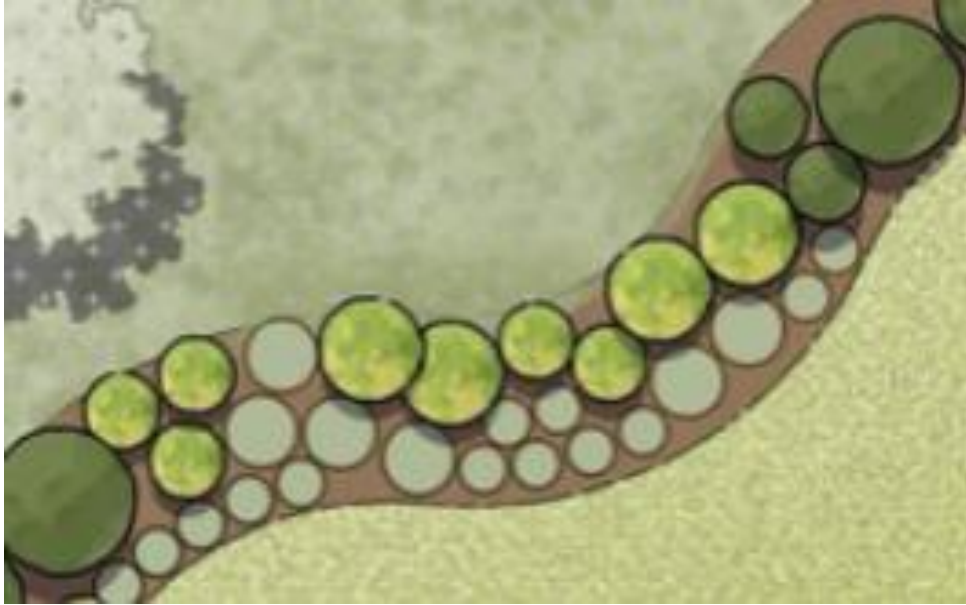
# Plant Palette



# Example Design



# Plan Before Planting



## Example Plant List

### Shrubs:

- 2 Dwarf Cenizo (mature width = 3 ft.)
- 2 Autumn Sage (2 ft.)

### Perennials:

- 4 Zexmenia (2 ft)
- 5 Blue Grama (1 ft.)

### Groundcover:

- 6 Wright's Skullcap (1 ft.)
- 5-6 Woolly Stemodia (2-3 ft. spread)

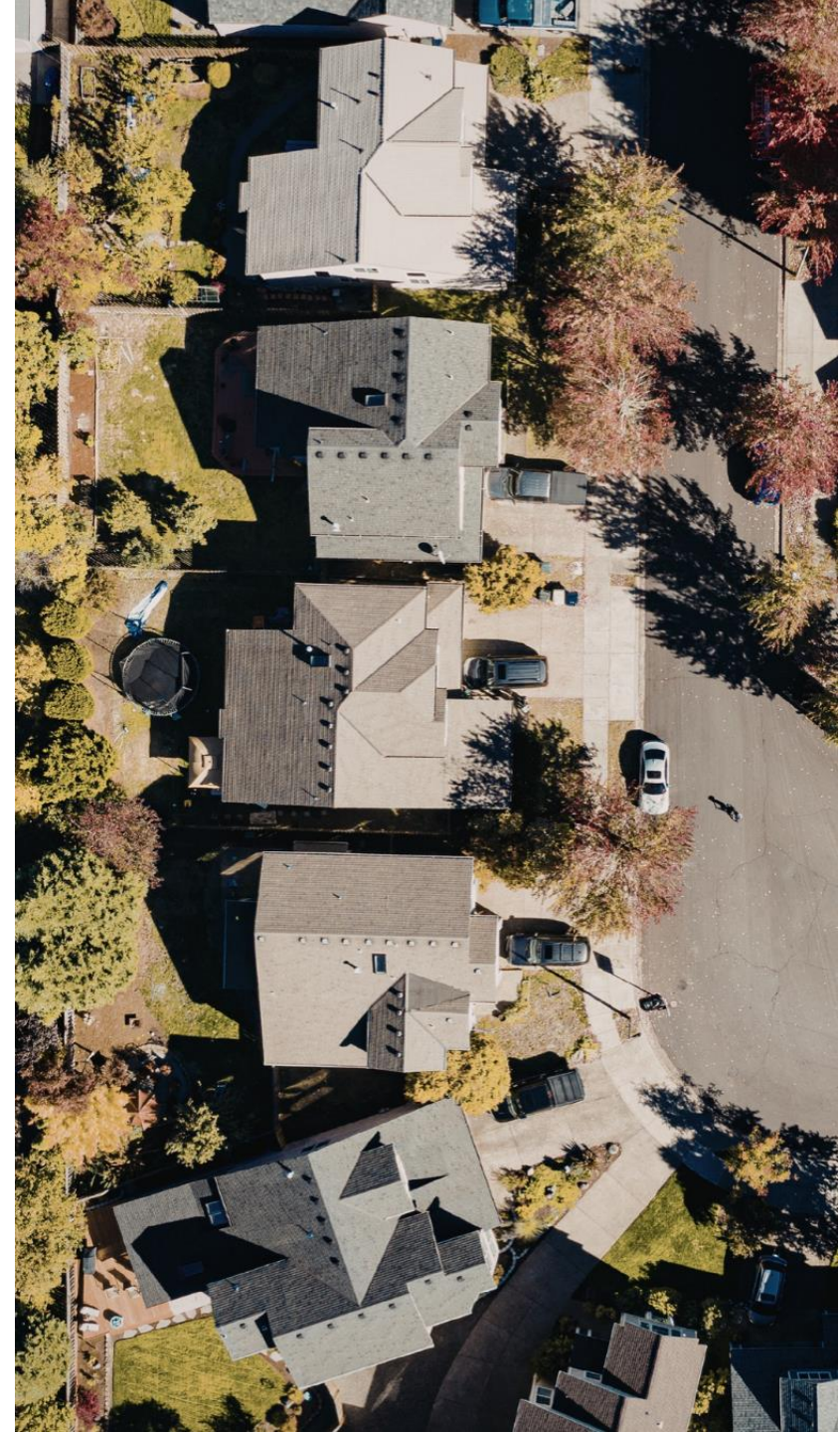
### Need design help? NPSOT has several resources:

- Service Provider Directory (see QR code below)
- Native Landscaping Certification Classes
- Reach out to your local chapter with questions



# 3. Notify your HOA

1. Review HOA guidelines first
1. Submit a simple landscape plan
  - o Emphasize that the design is intentional
  - o Provide a plant list with mature sizes
1. Explain practical benefits
1. Address maintenance concerns upfront



# 2013 Texas Property Code Change

It unlawful for HOAs to “include or enforce a provision in a dedicatory instrument that prohibits or restricts a property owner from:

1. composting
1. installing rain barrels or a rainwater harvesting system
1. implementing efficient irrigation systems
- 1. using drought-resistant landscaping or water-conserving natural turf**

## 4. Prep your site.



Outline future landscape beds

- Watch for utility lines
- Mark edges with flags, paint or edging

Methods to remove existing turfgrass

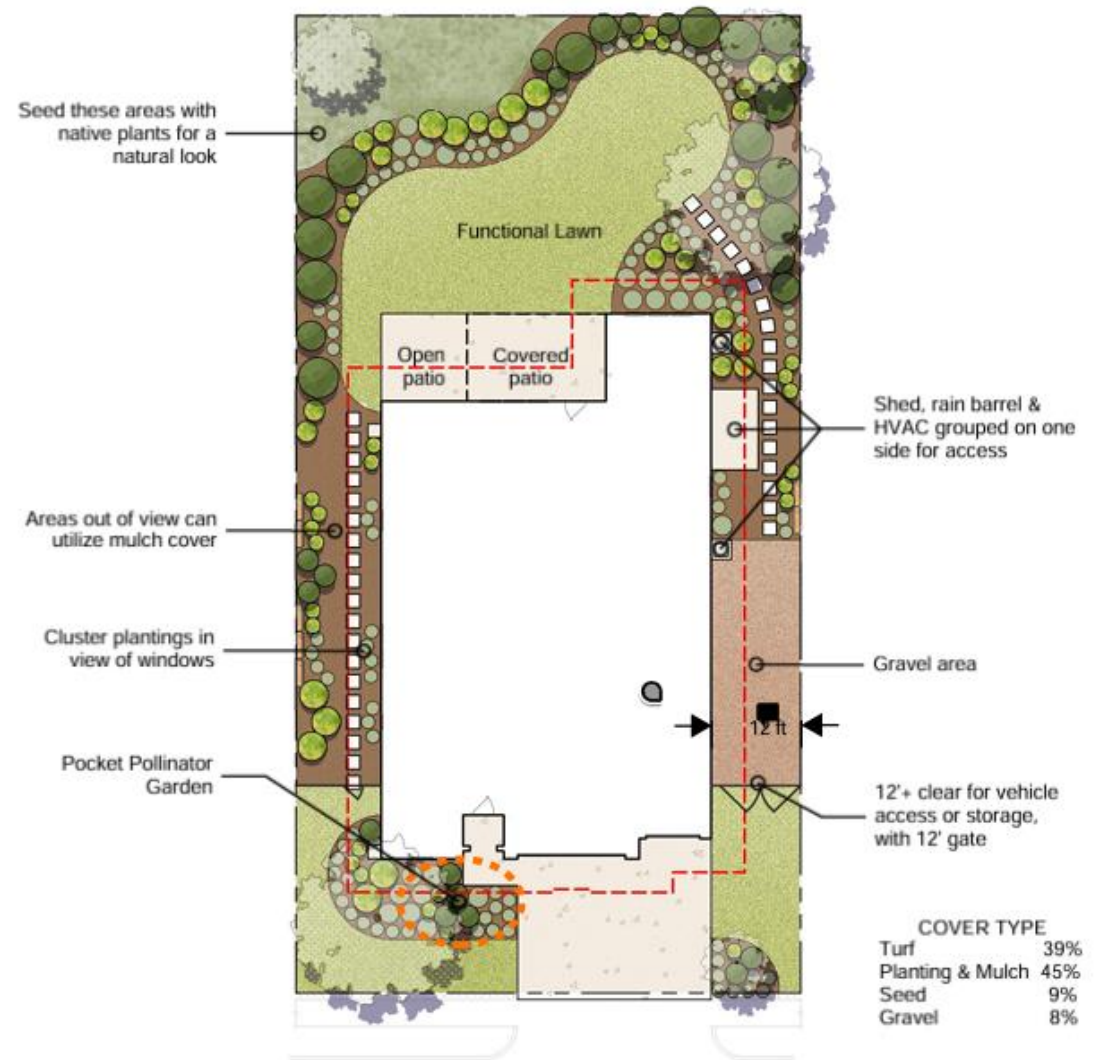
- Physical removal
- Sheet mulching
- Herbicide
- Machine removal
- Solarization

# 5. Set up your new landscape for success

- Landscaping requires up-front effort, but the payoff grows over time.
- Plants take between 5 weeks and two years to fully establish, and up to three years to fill in – “sleep, creep, leap.”
- The first summer is the most critical in terms of help from you.
- Appropriate maintenance is key. Keep plants in good shape and keep the native landscape looking intentional without overwatering or damaging plants.



# Additional Resources



# Resources

- [Native Plant Society Database and Service Provider Directory](#)
- [Native American Seed Plant Selector Tool](#)
- [Garden Style San Antonio](#)
- [Hill Country Alliance HOA Guide](#)
- For incentives, look up your city, local utility, GCD, and river authority

# Questions?

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brad.wier@saws.org

haeley.giambalvo@npsot.org

info@seedsource.com

Available at:

[hillcountryalliance.org/nativelandscapingtemplates](https://hillcountryalliance.org/nativelandscapingtemplates)

**NATIVE  
LANDSCAPING  
TEMPLATES**  
For the Hill Country

A Tool for Designing  
Water-Wise Yards

