

# **Xeriscaping Information and Regulations**

## **for Scofield Phase VIII Residential Owners Association, Inc.**

In light of the frequent and persistent drought conditions in the area, the Scofield Ridge Architectural Control Committee (ACC) is providing the following information and regulations for xeriscaping in Scofield Ridge.

Xeriscaping means using native and adapted plants that grow and sustain themselves with low water requirements, and that can tolerate heat and drought conditions. The City of Austin is vigorously promoting xeriscaping for resource conservation and environmental protection. The advantages of xeriscaping include:

- Substantial cost savings on water bills
- Conservation of diminishing water resources during drought periods
- Prevention of pollution of surface and ground water from environmentally harmful runoff
- Reduced yard maintenance requirements
- Pride in knowing you are doing something substantial to protect our fragile environment

### Approval for Changes

Prior to changing landscape, homeowners must submit an ACC application available on the Association's website at [www.scofieldridge.org](http://www.scofieldridge.org) under the *Resources* tab. The request must include an outline of the project and a design plan, as well as details on the types of plants, ground covers, border materials, and hardscape materials to be used. Allow 30 days for approval of the request; the ACC may request additional information or changes to the plan that may cause final approval to take longer. Installation of new xeriscape cannot begin until the application has been approved. Once landscape installation has commenced, the project must be completed within thirty (30) days. If the project is not completed within that time, homeowner may be subject to violations as outlined in the Enforcement and Fining Policy. Questions about xeriscaping may be directed to [acc@scofieldridge.org](mailto:acc@scofieldridge.org).

### Ground Cover

Non-turf areas may contain decomposed granite, ground hardwood mulch, crushed limestone, flagstone, or other loose stone material for a ground cover. The ground cover must be maintained to prevent weed growth, preferably without using toxic or environmentally harmful chemicals. Paver stones may be used to create walkways. Concrete surfaces are limited to driveways, sidewalks and patios only. Large areas may not be composed of a single material. For example, bare mulch/rock is not allowed unless interspersed with plants. Ground cover must not wash out onto the public sidewalk or street.

### Plants

Use plants adapted to the pH soil conditions created by the non-turf materials used. For example, don't use acid-loving plants along with alkaline crushed limestone. Acid-loving plants would do well with ground hardwood mulch. Native plants would do well with limestone or decomposed granite.

For public safety, no plant with thorns, spines, or sharp edges can be used within 6' of the public sidewalks (This is a City of Austin regulation). Also, no plants higher than 18" should be planted in the sidewalk strip area, as this constitutes a visual safety hazard to pedestrians and drivers.

For information and recommendations on appropriate plants, turf grasses, and trees to use in your yard, pick up a copy of the City of Austin's free 52-page book *Native and Adapted Landscape Plants: An Earthwise Guide for Central Texas*, commonly known as the "Grow Green" book, free at most nurseries. You can also download the book in PDF format from the website [www.growgreen.org](http://www.growgreen.org). Certain plants determined by the City of Austin to be invasive should not be planted. See Page 50 of the "Grow Green" book, or see "Invasive Plants" at [www.growgreen.org](http://www.growgreen.org). Common examples include berrying forms of *Nandina*, running varieties of bamboo, *Ligustrums* (Privet), *Photinia* plants, *Vitex*, and Chinaberry trees.

### Borders

A clearly defined xeriscape border separating one xeriscaped area from another xeriscaped area or turfed area must exist. This maintains a clean look and helps with erosion control to stop runoff. Borders can consist of metal edging or mortared masonry units or simply a well-maintained, consistent, clearly defined border between the xeriscaped area and the turfed area. Masonry products include stone, clay brick pavers, or concrete masonry units manufactured as edging shapes. Any proposed masonry edging must receive approval of the ACC. All masonry products must be properly mortared in place to avoid displacement and weed encroachment or growth between masonry units. Brick masonry must be approved for color and type; if brick units are to be used they must be solid units, not those with holes. No "common" concrete blocks are permitted. If iron edging is used, it must be properly staked and set with top edge not more than 2 inches above grade. Borders must be maintained as part of the landscaping, must be kept in attractive condition, and must be edged.

### Turf Grasses

New sod should be placed side-by-side so there are no gaps between pieces. Homeowners should consider replacing "thirsty" turf grasses such as St. Augustine with turf that has lower water requirements. Residents should also consider converting the narrow easement strips between the public sidewalks and the street curb from turf grass to xeriscaped areas, as these areas are difficult to water without street runoff.

Good turf grasses for our area include Buffalo grass, Zoysia, and Bermuda. However, no one turf grass is ideal for all situations, so carefully consider the amount of sunlight your lawn receives before choosing a new turf grass. More information on turf grasses can be found in the "Grow Green" book.

### Hardscapes

Hardscapes can include large boulders or other natural materials that are used as part of xeriscape landscaping design. Water features, urns, pots, and other man-made ornamentation can add variety, but are not to exceed four (4) items in public view. No boulders or large rocks exceeding 12" in height may be used on the narrow strips between public sidewalks and the street curb (This is a City of Austin regulation). Only 1 large boulder above 2' and not to exceed 3' in height is allowed in the front lawn and cannot create a visual safety hazard to pedestrians and drivers.

### Landscape Maintenance

Xeriscaped areas are subject to the same maintenance requirements as other landscaping and must be maintained at all times to ensure an attractive appearance. Plants must be trimmed, beds must be kept free of weeds and leaves, and borders must be edged. No plants may encroach on public sidewalks. Sickly and dying plants must be replaced with a similar plant matching the approved plan. Perennials that die back during winter must be cut back to remove dead material. This includes most ornamental grasses and other flowering perennials that go dormant in winter.