



GREEN HOME AND GARDEN TIP #9

BY GREEN HOME AND GARDEN COMMITTEE,
Texas Master Naturalist

This month, we are republishing tips for the yard promoted by the TCEQ (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) in their "Take Care of Texas" campaign. The program is designed to involve all Texans in lifestyle and habit changes that will save the individuals a little money and at the same time help improve air and water quality, conserve water and energy, and reduce waste. Next two months, we will be republishing their tips on **In the Kitchen** and **In the Bathroom**. You can find more tips and information by visiting <http://www.takecareoftexas.org/do-your-part-en/>

In the Yard

Try Composting

Yard trimmings make up 20% of the waste generated by Texans each year. Instead of throwing them out with the garbage, you can recycle these materials by composting them. Compost can serve as a soil conditioner that will help improve your garden and reduce your water usage. By using mulch and compost on lawns and gardens, Texans could reduce the need for outdoor watering by 30% to 60%.

Use an Electric Lawn Mower

For each hour of operation, one gas-powered lawn mower emits 11 times more air pollution than a new car. Forty million American lawn mowers consume 200 million gallons of gasoline per year, and gas-powered garden-tool emissions account for an estimated 5% of the nation's air pollution. Using an electric lawn mower instead can save you 73% in total energy cost.

Collect and Use Rainwater

Lawn and garden watering make up nearly 40% of total household water use during the summer. By collecting rainwater for use on your lawn, plants, flowers, trees, and shrubs during the peak summer months, you can save 1,300 gallons of water. If all Texas households collected rainwater for their watering needs, we could keep more than 10 billion gallons of water in our aquifers, lakes, and rivers.

Use Native Plants

Plants that are native to Texas aren't only beautiful; they typically require less water, pesticides, fertilizers, and maintenance—saving you time and money. The deep root systems of many native plants also increase the soil's capacity to store water and reduce runoff. Native plants also attract a variety of birds, and butterflies, by providing diverse habitats and food sources.

Plant Shade Trees

Planting deciduous trees on the south and west sides of your house and around your air conditioner will help save you energy by keeping your home shady and cool in the summer, yet allow the sun to shine through windows to warm your home in the winter. Just three properly placed deciduous trees around your house can save an average household between \$100 and \$250 in heating and cooling costs each year.

Annual Savings: \$175

The Texas Master Naturalists is a group of informed volunteers who are interested in learning about and educating others about the area of Texas where we live and with preserving our natural heritage. We are co-sponsored by the Texas Cooperative Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife. For more information about our group, log on to <http://gcmn.tamu.edu> or www.coastalprairie.org.

The Green Home and Garden Workshop is an ongoing project co-sponsored by the Gulf Coast chapter and the Coastal Prairie chapter of Texas Master Naturalists. Our mission is to interest and inform people about safe and eco-friendly ways to garden and maintain their homes. We have a workshop event once a year. The next workshop will be held on February 16, 2008.