

Stage 1 Drought Restrictions

Distribute 07-16-2020

It was great to have a full year without severe drought or water use restrictions, but we are back in the normal summer pattern now in August of 2020, complete with Stage 1 Water Use Restrictions. The goal of drought restrictions is to reduce water use so that we protect our regional water sources such as the Edwards Aquifer, and everyone has access to essential water supplies, even during a severe drought.

Through years of experience the City of San Antonio and our regional partners have learned that we can reduce water use enough to protect essential supplies simply by using less water on the lawn. That is what we will discuss in most detail in this article, but drought restrictions also cover water waste, swimming pool evaporation, car washing, and other water uses. For more information on those uses and lawn watering, visit the SAWS gardenstylesa.com website.

San Antonio Stage 1 Drought Restrictions only allow us to water our lawn with a sprinkler once per week on our designated day based on the address. Addresses that end with 0 or 1 can irrigate on Monday. If your address ends with a 2 or 3 water on Tuesday and properties that have an address that ends with 4 or 5 may water on Wednesday. Those addresses that end with 6 and 7 irrigate on Thursday and those that end with 8 or 9 water on Friday. There is some potential to receive a permit to have access to more frequent irrigation access for a new lawn, but do not launch the project until you visit the SAWS.org website and your permit request is granted.

The irrigation in Stage 1 can only be operated before 11 am or after 7pm on your assigned day. Overnight watering is not allowed, so the system cannot run later than midnight. No irrigation systems except drip systems may be used on weekends. Drip systems because of their efficiency may be used any day of the week during Stage 1. If you live in another jurisdiction, check on their restrictions, they may be different from San Antonio's.

Soaker hoses resemble drip irrigation more than the inefficient sprinkler irrigation, but because it is easy to turn on an excessive water flow with the hose spigot, SAWS has lumped soaker hose use in the same category as sprinkler irrigation. It can only be used on your designated day.

If you have Bermuda, zoysia or buffalo grass they can be allowed to go dormant if it is impractical to apply enough water to keep the lawn green. The dormancy decision also saves lots of money. It is best to irrigate St Augustine at least once every 2 weeks for grass survival. The dormant grasses will recover when the rains and cooler weather returns. If you have an area that is especially prone to dry out, you can let it go dormant or supplement its dose of sprinkler water with a hand application. Hand watering is allowed any day and at any time.

If you have a large planting of zinnias, mistflower, porter weed, and milkweed to supply nectar for your butterflies it will require some attention to keep them supplied with enough water to keep fresh blooms being produced and an active nectar flow. They are all generally tall plants with large bloom areas that require access to water more than once/week to keep them fulfilling their role. If you are in San Antonio and have a drip system you can operate it as often as every day to keep the flowers in an active

state. If you rely on sprinklers or soaker hoses use your watering day for a generous application and then meet any further needs in the bed by hand watering.

Also keep an eye on your shrubs and trees, especially those that were planted within 2 or 3 years. With drought it is not uncommon for the root balls to dry out and the plants to drop all their leaves. If you detect wilting on a young tree or shrub hand, water them directly at the base so that the root ball gets soaked.

For your fall tomatoes, if they were purchased as 2-inch peat pot plants, it is best to keep them in a 1-3-gallon container filled with potting soil and Osmocote until the plants grow larger. Place the containers in morning sun and afternoon shade. Some nurseries sell recommended selections like Tycoon, Red Snapper, Celebrity, HM8849, and BHN 968 in the 1-gallon size. They are the best transplant option in hot weather like we are experiencing.