

Landscape Water Usage Questions & Answers

How much water does my large lot “need?”

This is a challenge for staff at SAWS to answer. Need is something always in the eye of the beholder. If your landscape has dormancy capable grasses and other plants, then it needs very little to stay healthy. However, you might want more in order to maintain a certain look.

What about my grass. How much water does it “need?”

SAWS provides watering advice each week on how to apply water to keep portions of grass green. This advice is called the weekly SIP and it is in our WaterSaver e-newsletter. The amount listed will usually be sufficient to keep grass looking green. (An exception is this summer with extraordinary conditions when not much is green.) But, we do not suggest that people water all of their grass to the point of being green when weather is dry. We suggest deciding on what area is a priority and watering that more and other areas less or not at all.

What is the 1/3 suggestion SAWS gives for landscape planning?

We suggest that people plan their WaterSaver Landscape to have zones that are 1/3 higher water need, 1/3 no water need and 1/3 low water need. And, we suggest that the maximum area each family irrigate and manage be about 10,000 square feet. (This is the area that city code now has as the maximum irrigation size for a residential new property.) The 1/3 suggestion can be very attractive because it can combine 1/3 grass that is watered well, 1/3 hardscape or decking and 1/3 bedding areas that contain evergreen shrubs and blooming plants.

What if I don't want to do a deck or hardscape like flagstone?

For that 1/3 consider having dormant grass that is not watered. Grasses like Bermuda can go completely dormant and survive well if they have soil under them. Many people like the flagstone or decking options though because it creates a sort of outdoor living area while letting water flow through to recharge our aquifer.

I have nearly all grass now. What could I do?

SAWS wants to help! We are launching a Drought Recovery Package this fall. It includes special rebates on mulch and irrigation changes to help you get closer to a more balanced landscape. Master Gardeners will happily come to your neighborhood to share ideas. It is not hard to gradually change your landscape without spending a fortune. Watch the SAWS website for the Drought Recovery Package in September. Our goal is to help you create a landscape that is easier to care for, needs less water and that is even more beautiful than what you had before!

WaterSaver Plan for Median San Antonio Family Home

- A median lot is approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ acre or 10,890 square feet.
- Of that 10,890 square feet, about 7,200 square feet is considered “landscapable.” The rest is taken up by the home, driveway and sidewalks.
- SAWS recommended WaterSaver practices are that the landscape be managed in the following way:
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ turf
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ decking or hardscape or dormant grass
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ bedding areas for blooming and evergreen plants
- Using these divisions, water requirements for each area can be calculated as follows:
 - Turf (for a hot, dry June month)
 - $2,400 \text{ ft}^2 \times 3 \text{ inches of water per ft}^2 \times 0.62 \text{ gallons} = 4,464 \text{ gallons}$
 - Decking / Hardscape / Dormant Grass
 - 0 gallons
 - Bedding
 - $2,400 \text{ ft}^2 \times 3 \text{ inches of water per ft}^2 \times 0.62 \text{ gallons} = 2,232 \text{ gallons}$
- This amounts to a total of **6,696 gallons** of water for outdoor use
- Indoor use, based on Raftelis data, is approximately **5,200 gallons**
(Efficient indoor use for a typical family of 4-5 could be 5,000 to 6,000 gallons per month with efficient fixtures and good conservation habits.)
- Total use for the month would be **11,896 gallons.**