

## Let your sprinklers slumber on — it's winter, and we're still in Stage 3

Winter is the ideal time to let your sprinklers sleep because your lawn is snoozing too. And that's a good thing since we're starting off 2026 still under watering rules — and in drought.

Back-to-back years of record heat paired with a severe lack of rainfall continue to challenge the Edwards Aquifer. This means Stage 3 watering rules are still in effect.

As a reminder, Stage 3 watering hours for sprinklers — in-ground and hose-end — are 5-10 a.m. and 9 p.m. to midnight on your once-a-week watering day.

The best thing you can do for your landscape and water bill: Turn off your irrigation system and run it manually only as needed. Doing so will not only help you save water now, but it can add up to big savings throughout 2026. That's because SAWS sewer charges are based on your average winter water use — meaning the less water you use through mid-March, the lower your monthly sewer charge will be

for the rest of 2026.

You can still water with a hand-held hose any time, any day. And you may even enjoy it! Our typically mild winters are ideal for getting outside and doing some prep work for a great spring garden.

Here's what you can tend to now.

- **Clean up struggling or diseased plants.**
- **Remove invasive weeds** that may have taken hold over the growing season.

- **Prune freeze-damaged perennials** but leave damaged vegetation as wildlife shelter and seed meals for overwintering birds.
- **Replenish mulch** to provide a buffer against a rare hard frost or freezing weather.
- **Clean and sharpen tools** to extend their lifespan.



Remember to visit **GardenStyleSA.com** for weekly watering advice and landscaping tips to keep your yard thriving.

## Resolve to start 2026 off right

A new year is an opportunity to start fresh — to right some wrongs, or to do things differently. That doesn't just apply to you, but your home and yard too.

Resolve to show your home and landscape some love! Here's a short and simple checklist to help you get started.

- Keep fats, oils and grease out of your pipes! Learn more at [saws.org/pipes](https://saws.org/pipes).
- It's cool to compost — toss uncooked fresh fruit and veggie scraps into your green organics cart. Learn more at [sa.gov/swmd](https://sa.gov/swmd).

- Plan your landscape upgrade. Visit **GardenStyleSA.com** for lots of design ideas!
- Save stamps and time — pay your water bill online. It's easy with [saws.org/myaccount](https://saws.org/myaccount). Or better yet: download the SAWS My Account mobile app from Google Play or the Apple App Store.
- Look for leaks and waste to keep winter water use low — and to save money on your 2026 sewer bill.

Wishing you a happy and healthy 2026!

## Event Calendar

### San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo

**Feb. 12-March 1**

Frost Bank Center/Freeman Coliseum  
3201 E. Houston St.  
[sarodeo.com](http://sarodeo.com)

### Garden Design: From Concept to Plan

**Feb. 18**

Northeast Community Learning Center  
8750 Tesoro Dr.  
[gardeningvolunteers.org](http://gardeningvolunteers.org)

### Bluff Spurs Hike

**Feb. 21**

Government Canyon State Natural Area  
12861 Galm Road  
[tpwd.texas.gov/calendar](http://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar)

### Beginner Bird Walk

**Feb. 28**

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center  
10750 Pleasonton Road  
[mitchelllake.audubon.org](http://mitchelllake.audubon.org)

### Save the Date: SAWS Spring Bloom

**March 14**

SAWS Headquarters  
2800 U.S. Hwy 281 N  
[saws.org/bloom](http://saws.org/bloom)

### Customer Service and 24-hour Emergency

**210-704-SAWS (7297)**  
[saws.org/waternews](http://saws.org/waternews)

## Inspections for new irrigation systems starting in 2026

Poorly built irrigation systems waste 20% of the water they use. To make sure we're thoughtfully managing our resources, SAWS will begin inspecting all new in-ground sprinkler systems in 2026 to ensure they're designed and installed according to state and local regulations.

These systems are complex — so much so that Texas is one of the few states that requires a license to work on them.

It's important to make sure the workers

designing and installing these systems are licensed and have undergone rigorous training on irrigation regulations. City code and the SAWS Utility Service Regulations require that a licensed individual be present and supervise the installation of a new system, and that a city permit has been issued for the work.

For more information about the requirements for both plan review and inspections, including the checklists we use, visit [saws.org/irrigationplan](http://saws.org/irrigationplan).



## Prune now to avoid oak wilt

There's not much time left to prune your oak trees this winter, especially if you want to minimize the chance of oak wilt. During the coldest days of the year, the beetles that carry the spores of the oak wilt fungus are very few and unlikely to fly.

Pruning is done for three reasons (in order of importance): safety, tree health and appearance.

Some helpful dos and don'ts:

- **Prune narrow branch junctions that are V-shaped.** These are structurally weak, especially if two or more of the branches are of equal diameters. Long

branches that have been repeatedly stripped of their lateral branches should be shortened or removed completely.

- **Look for the "3-D" branches: dead, diseased and dying.**

These are a source of illness and insects, as well as a food source to attract more disease and insects.

- **Never cut through the branch collar.** This donut-shaped ring at the junction of two branches or trunks is a zone of specialized cells and chemicals that reduces the potential for decay and disease.

- **Always paint fresh oak wounds.**

This is a must to preventing oak wilt. You don't need to paint the wounds for elm, ash, sycamore, pine, tallow or pecan trees.



## Save the date: Basura Bash happens March 7

The largest single-day waterway cleanup in Texas has been rescheduled for better weather — Basura Bash 2026 will happen March 7!

Every year more than 1,500 volunteers diligently dedicate a Saturday morning to collect



as much trash as possible from San Antonio's rivers and streams — recycling what they can and discarding the rest.

You can join these trash-slashing superheroes in the citywide effort. Visit [basurabash.org](http://basurabash.org) for more information and to sign up!