

WHAT IS A VARIANCE?

A variance gives you a temporary exception from following the watering schedule. Austin Water issues variances for a few limited situations. They are mainly for new xeriscapes, large properties too big to water in the time allowed, and health/safety reasons. Austin Water approves applications on a case-by-case basis. Applying for a variance does not mean you will get one. You must follow the [current watering schedule](#) until Austin Water approves the variance.

WHEN DO VARIANCES EXPIRE?

A variance usually expires either on a stated date or when the reason it was needed ends.

CAN AUSTIN WATER SUSPEND OR CANCEL A VARIANCE?

Austin Water may suspend or cancel a variance if any of the following occur:

- A customer does not follow the terms of the variance.
- Austin Water finds that an application has false, misleading, incomplete, or wrong information.
- The Austin Water director declares an emergency recall of variances.

CAN I GET A VARIANCE TO WATER ON AN EXTRA DAY?

No. You may use a handheld hose or bucket at any time on any day to water areas that need extra irrigation.

WHAT IF I CAN'T WATER MY ENTIRE PROPERTY IN THE TIME ALLOWED?

You may apply for a Large Property Variance. This variance lets you divide your property into sections. Your irrigation system can then water each section no more than one time a week. Customers with hose-end sprinklers can also qualify if their lot's size/shape keeps them from watering it in the two days allowed.

I WORK ON MY WATERING DAY. CAN I GET A VARIANCE TO CHANGE TO A DIFFERENT DAY? WHAT ABOUT FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE / FUNERAL ATTENDANCE / SPORTS ACTIVITY / VACATION / TRASH PICKUP?

Austin Water does not offer a variance to change watering days. If you use a hose-end sprinkler, adding a [watering timer](#) might make watering easier. You may also water with a handheld hose or a bucket at any time on any day of the week.

MY ELDERLY PARENT HAS AN ILLNESS/DISABILITY AND CAN'T WATER ON AN ASSIGNED DAY DUE TO THE CARE PROVIDER'S SCHEDULE. IS A VARIANCE AVAILABLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

Residents with a documented disability/medical condition may qualify for a variance if they do not have an automatic irrigation system. Austin Water evaluates Medical Hardship or Disability variances on a case-by-case basis. Customers who rely on someone to help them water can submit a statement that explains their situation and request an alternative schedule.

IF I PUT IN NEW TURF/LANDSCAPE VEGETATION, CAN I HAVE EXTRA DAYS TO WATER IT WHILE IT GETS ESTABLISHED?

To qualify for a variance, new landscapes must meet the Water Conservation Code definition of a Xeriscape. The plants must be listed as either "low water usage" or "very low water usage" on the Austin Water [Xeriscape Plant List](#). Plant material at mature growth must cover at least 50% of the new landscape's area.

I NEED TO WATER IN FERTILIZER FOR MY YARD. MAY I GET A VARIANCE?

You may not get a variance to apply a chemical lawn treatment to your own property. You will need to apply the treatment on a regular watering day for your address.

If a commercial company applies the treatment, they can do so on any day and at any time. Be sure to keep the receipt showing the application day(s) and company name.

CAN I GET A VARIANCE TO CHANGE OUT THE COLOR BEDS OR OVERSEED AT MY PROPERTY?

Austin Water does not grant a variance for overseeding. If you are putting in a color bed that is over 500 square feet, you may qualify for a Xeriscape Variance. Color beds that are less than 500 square feet should be watered on your watering day or by hand.

CAN I GET A VARIANCE TO ALLOW EXTRA WATERING FOR FIRE PROTECTION?

Austin Water does not offer a variance for extra watering for fire prevention. You can use water as needed if an uncontrollable fire is approaching a person or property.

The Fire Department has found that lawn watering does not have much effect on [preventing grass fires](#). Most fires start in wild lands or on roadside/greenbelt areas. Flying embers from these fires spread the fire onto homes. An ember may land in a dry lawn and begin to burn the grass. Unless the grass is several inches tall it should not be a significant fire threat to the house. To reduce the risk of fire spreading to your home, keep brush/debris at least 50 feet from your house and clear your roof-top gutters.