New Commercial Landscape Requirements: INNOVATIVE WATER MANAGEMENT

The new ordinance has the potential to:

- Reduce long-term water costs
- Enable landscapes to qualify for water quality credit
- Qualify for LEED/Green Building credit
- Provide more attractive, sustainable landscapes

For additional information that includes potential challenges and solutions, visit: www.austintexas.gov/department/stormwater-management
Since the 1980’s Austin has required landscaping of commercial areas for aesthetic, buffering, screening, and urban heat island abatement. Traditionally, this landscaping has relied on potable water irrigation. The new (2010) ordinance requires techniques that better direct stormwater to vegetated areas in order to:

- Use rainwater wisely
- Conserve potable water
- Help improve water quality

**Ordinance:**

The new ordinance requires commercial properties to:

- Direct stormwater to at least 50% of the required landscaping (Undisturbed natural areas or undisturbed existing trees can count toward the 50% requirement as long as no potable water is used to maintain)

**Potential Solutions:**

- Direct overland stormwater flow to recessed landscaped areas
- Create a raingarden -- a shallow, vegetated depression designed to absorb and filter runoff from impervious surfaces (www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Watershed/growgreen/raingarden_factsheet.pdf)
- Direct gutter downspouts to vegetated areas
- Capture rainwater in cisterns

There are no requirements (including irrigation) for areas where existing, undisturbed vegetation is retained.