

# THE Austin Water Block Leader Program

June 2012

A quarterly publication  
of Austin Water

## In this issue...

Drought Update  
Vegetable Gardens  
Conservation Checklist  
Rainwater Harvesting  
Renewing Austin  
PRV Rebates

## What's up with the drought?

The most common question we get these days at Austin Water is: Are we still in a drought?

*The answer is yes.*

Even though recent rains have lessened the effects of the drought and added more water to the lakes, the combined levels of Lakes Buchanan and Travis are still less than half full.

Wasting water is prohibited year-round in Austin. To ensure you do not waste water, be mindful

of leaking faucets, pipes, and irrigation systems operating with misdirected or broken sprinkler heads. Visit our website at [waterwiseaustin.org](http://waterwiseaustin.org) to find out more about available rebates and programs to help save water and get information about detecting water-wasting leaks.

## How to Conserve Around the House

Need help saving water? See our new Water Conservation checklist on page 2 to get started!

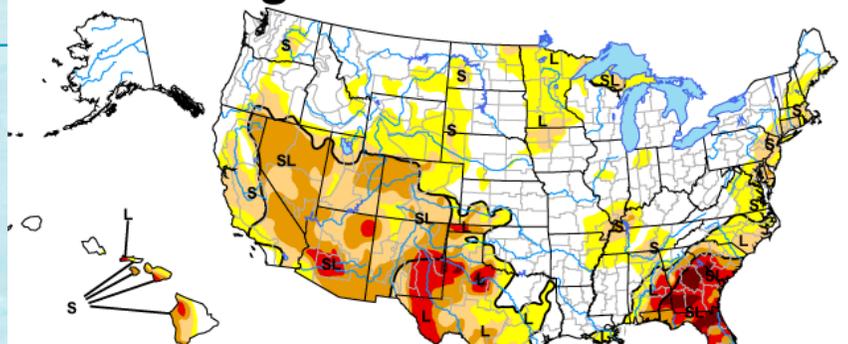
For more information, contact  
Austin Water at 974-2199,  
[watercon@austintexas.gov](mailto:watercon@austintexas.gov)  
or visit our website:  
[WaterWiseAustin.org](http://WaterWiseAustin.org)

## Drought Update

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. Visit [www.droughtmonitor.unl.edu](http://www.droughtmonitor.unl.edu) to access the interactive map.

## U.S. Drought Monitor

May 15, 2012  
Valid 7 a.m. EDT



### Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

### Drought Impact Types:

- ~ Delineates dominant impacts
- S = Short-Term, typically <6 months (e.g. agriculture, grasslands)
- L = Long-Term, typically >6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>



Released Thursday, May 17, 2012  
Author: Brad Rippey, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Austin  
**WATER**  
Clearly Reliable



# Water Wisely



## Do You Grow Your Own Vegetables?

To support City sustainability initiatives and community-wide efforts to increase local food production, Austin Water has developed alternative restrictions for individuals using water to support food-producing plants in outdoor gardens. To receive a permit for alternative compliance, a water account holder must return the following form and adhere to the restrictions outlined below. A copy of the approved form must be posted in a location on the property that is accessible and visible to the public (account number and contact information may be redacted).

Approved alternative compliance permits will allow the account holder to water areas of food production at any day or time with drip systems or soaker hoses, Tuesday through Sunday in the morning and/or evening with a hose-end sprinkler, or twice per week in the morning and/or evening with an in-ground spray system. In all cases, alternative compliance permits require that water usage be reduced by 20% from a comparable month. This reduction meets the intent of Stage 2 or 3 water use restrictions, while allowing gardeners more flexibility to meet the needs of their plants by spreading out water application over multiple days.

Alternative compliance permits are intended for gardens producing food for retail sale, those used by many people as part of a community garden, and for individual gardens that provide a reasonable portion of household food consumption when in season. They are not intended for herb gardens, for solitary vegetable plants within a landscape garden, or fruit trees other than those that are part of urban farms and intended for retail production.

Go to [WaterWiseAustin.org](http://WaterWiseAustin.org) to access the Alternative Compliance Application for Vegetable Gardening.

## Check Out Our Checklist

Want to save water but don't know where to start? Our new, easy to use conservation checklist is for you. It has simple ways to save water inside and outside the home. Share it with friends... download a copy at [WaterWiseAustin.org](http://WaterWiseAustin.org).

**WATER CONSERVATION CHECKLIST** Austin Water City of Austin

**INDOOR TIPS**

- Check your toilet for leaks. Put a few drops of food coloring in the tank. If it appears in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak that needs repair.
- Replace older toilets with WaterSense® labeled high-efficiency models that use only 1.28 gallons per flush or consider installing a dual flush model that can use even less.
- Take shorter showers—try for less than 5 minutes. If you take a bath, fill the tub half full.
- Install water-saving aerators on your bathroom faucets and water-saving showerheads that use 2.5 gallons per minute or less.
- Turn off the water while shaving, brushing your teeth, lathering in the shower, and shampooing or conditioning your hair.
- Fix leaky or dripping faucets promptly. Plumbing leaks account for approximately 14 percent of water consumed in the home.
- Run your dishwasher and clothes washer with only full loads. Scrape food from plates instead of rinsing them before washing.
- Chill drinking water in the refrigerator instead of running the faucet to cool water.
- Replace your clothes washer with a qualifying water-saving model.

Call 974-2199 or visit [WaterWiseAustin.org](http://WaterWiseAustin.org) for information on rebates and irrigation system evaluations as well as free aerators and showerheads.

**OUTDOOR TIPS**

- Choose drought-tolerant plants when landscaping, and group plants with similar water needs together (hydrozoning). Add compost or mulch around trees and plants.
- Thoroughly check your irrigation system each spring when you first turn it on and repair any leaks as soon as possible. Schedule a free irrigation system evaluation if needed.
- Clean your driveway or sidewalk with a broom, not a hose.
- Water your lawn only on your assigned day and adjust sprinklers so that only your lawn is being watered.
- Install a rain barrel or rainwater harvesting system to capture rainwater from your roof for use on your landscape.

## Catch Precious Rain with a Rain Barrel

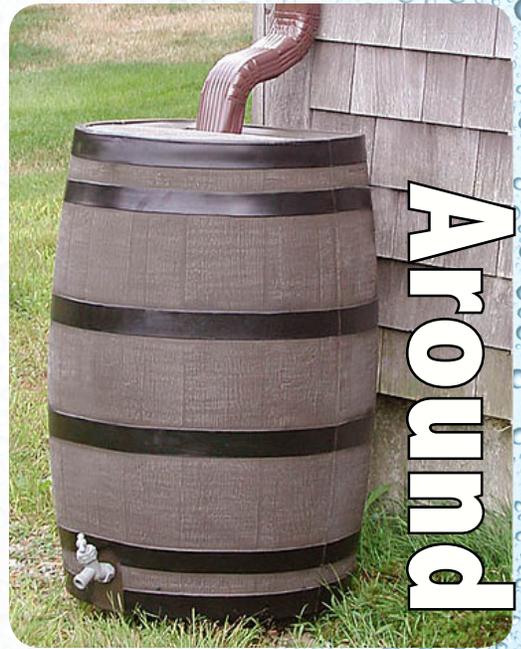
We go for long periods without rain in Austin. But when it does rain, it pours! Why not catch all that wonderful water to use later? Rainwater harvesting systems are a great way to catch and store **water** for later use around your property. We can help with rebates for installing rainwater harvesting systems on your property.

Rebates of \$0.50 per gallon (non-pressurized) and \$1.00 per gallon (pressurized) are available to customers of Austin Water or a qualifying water provider for installing rainwater harvesting systems. The maximum lifetime rebate amount is \$5,000, not to exceed 50 percent of the project cost. Participation is limited to once every 12 months until the maximum rebate amount is reached. Systems of 500 gallons or more require approval prior to purchase and installation. For tax purposes, commercial and multi-family properties must submit a completed IRS Form W-9.

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*For more information about Austin Water programs, contact us at 974-2199 or [watercon@austintexas.gov](mailto:watercon@austintexas.gov)*

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**Around  
Town**



## Austin Water Kicks Off Renewing Austin

A 5-year Program to Replace Aging Water Lines

Austin Water recently launched “Renewing Austin” a five-year program to upgrade aging water lines and to keep pace with the infrastructure demands of a growing city. Renewing Austin will invest \$125 million and targets the areas throughout the city with the greatest need. The Utility regularly conducts testing of water lines with special acoustic equipment that “listens” for leaks as part of its’ operations and maintenance program. The Utility also tracks breaks and leaks in a database that is then reviewed in order to choose which water lines to include in the new construction projects.

Austin Water will partner with the Public Works Department whose project management staff will supervise construction. Austin Water will also coordinate with Public Works to replace water lines when streets are under construction for maintenance and other utility work. Cities across the nation are facing the demands of upgrading aging water lines. According to a recent report by the American Water Works Association (AWWA), more than \$1 trillion dollars needs to be spent between now and 2035 to replace the nation’s aging water distribution system. Last summer, Austin Water experienced a record number of water leaks because of extreme drought conditions. By implementing Renewing Austin, the Utility is leading the way in water conservation and reliability of water services.



## PRV Rebates Can Help You Save Water and Money

Pressure regulating valves (PRVs) are a type of valve installed in a property's plumbing in order to regulate water pressure. They also help conserve water because higher water pressure leads to more waste.

PRVs are compact, inexpensive devices that reduce the high incoming water pressure from the city mains to a lower, more functional pressure for distribution to the home. They also maintain a set pressure in the home (usually between 50 and 65 pounds per square inch, or psi) to ensure that the home pipes and appliances operate under a safe, but satisfactory pressure. PRVs are also used to moderate excessive pressure to irrigation systems. If your irrigation system is misting, you might have high pressure.

The City of Austin offers two separate rebates (up to \$100 each):

- PRV for irrigation system (requires Austin Water irrigation evaluation prior to beginning work)
- PRV for the house requires a static pressure 80 psi and no previous PRV installed (no Austin Water site visit required)

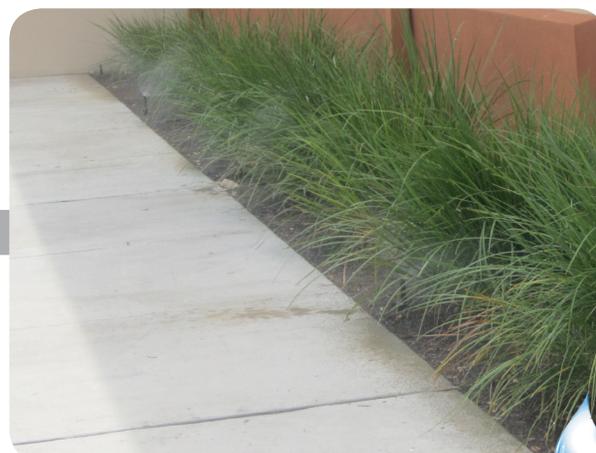
To be eligible for the rebate, you must have water pressure over 80 pounds psi and not have a PRV already installed. To find out the static pressure at your home or to schedule a free irrigation evaluation, call 974-2199.

# Rebates



**Before**

The Unity Church called Austin Water to help them with their automatic irrigation system. The photos above show the high pressure spray and resulting runoff onto the sidewalk. The photos below show the same irrigation system **turned on** after the a pressure regulating valve has been installed. No more runoff!



**After**