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.