

Don't be a drip---be a WWIP!

Karen Stewart, Water Conservation Specialist, Sr.
Austin Water Utility, Water Conservation Program
Austin, Texas

In Texas, landscape irrigation is regulated by the state agency, Texas Commission for Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Licensed irrigators are often involved with determining much of the commercial and multi-family irrigation use, as well as some residential water use. This water consumption drives the summer peak-day water use. In an effort to communicate the need for water conservation, the City of Austin Water Conservation Program, now with the Austin Water Utility, instituted an annual training for licensed irrigators. The WaterWise Irrigation Seminar provides licensed irrigators with the 8 hours CEU's needed for their license renewal. By completing the course and agreeing to support the City's programs, irrigators may also apply to be a WaterWise Irrigation Professional (WWIP). WWIP's are then put on a list to provide services to homeowners who need repairs. The City's irrigation auditors may hand out the list, or it maybe found on our website.

The annual WaterWise Irrigation training includes water conservation topics such as peak-day information, water availability, City of Austin ordinances on water waste and peak-day water restrictions, and water conservation programs such as irrigation evaluations and rebates. Other topics that have been covered include information about weather patterns presented by a meteorologist, backflow prevention and requirements, a turfgrass drought study, rainwater harvesting and alternate water sources, electrical troubleshooting, irrigation BMP's, Smart Controllers and ET controllers, and plant water requirements.

In order to publicize the training, a statewide list of licensed irrigators is obtained from TCEQ. Out of this list, a mailing is sent to the five county Austin metro area. Caldwell, Bastrop, Hays, Travis and Williamson counties all have irrigators that work in the Austin area. This is approximately 400 irrigators. The mail-out includes registration for the class, WWIP materials that list the qualifications, and an agreement to sign. (See attached forms and sample registration.) Some years we have more than one class, and sometimes we offer an 8 hour or 4 hour class. Up to 150 irrigators typically sign up for our classes. About half of those sign up to be WWIP's. One of the requirements is that the individual does business with Austin Water Customers. This criterion does not apply to all who attend. This annual class has earned a reputation for providing valuable information, and is anticipated by local irrigators.

While the author is the primary instructor, a large portion of the class presentations are made by guest speakers who are professionals in that area.

Field trips to see Central Control systems, weather stations, and location of the seminar such as the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and Umlauf Sculpture garden make the class interesting.

Water Conservation charges \$50 for an 8 hour class. This class would be approximately \$150 in the private sector which adds to its popularity. The cost of the class pays for the venue, breakfast, snacks and lunch or expenses of the speakers.

The class attendees are provided with handouts, plant guides for the Austin area, and other materials related to water conservation. Irrigation vendors and proprietary information is prohibited by TCEQ for CEU presentations. Therefore, at times we have invited vendors that pertain to the topic such as drip irrigation or ET controllers. At the end of the seminar, participants are given an evaluation form. The form asks not only about the quality of the seminar, but what topics would be interesting for future presentations. This is very helpful when planning the next year's topics. The evaluations are quite favorable.

At the close of the day, the participants receive their certificate of completion required by TCEQ, and the WWIP's receive a framed certificate every year to hang in their office, similar to yearly BBB (Better Business Bureau) stickers.



Requirements for City of Austin WaterWise Irrigation Professional (WWIP)

“It is declared that, because safe high quality drinking water is a precious resource, the general welfare requires that the water resources available to the city be put to the maximum beneficial use to the extent to which they are capable, and the waste, or unreasonable use, or unreasonable method of use of water be prevented, and the conservation of water is to be extended with a view to its reasonable and beneficial use in the interests of the people of the city and for the public health and welfare.”

City of Austin Policy 4-21-55

1. Be a licensed irrigator that works for or owns a company that installs irrigation systems for City of Austin or Austin wholesale (MUD districts) water customers.
2. Attend a City of Austin WaterWise Irrigation Program (WWIP) Seminar (8 hours) yearly.
3. Fill out agreement form and return to COA Water Conservation office yearly.
 - Use MPR heads and nozzles
 - Promote City of Austin Efficient Irrigation rebates and auditing programs
 - Install systems at proper operating pressure
 - Promote the once every five-day watering calendar
 - Install rain shut-off devices and other water conservation equipment
4. Irrigator will receive a certificate at the seminar.
5. Remain a member in good standing by following the agreement, attend the required educational seminar and sign the agreement each year.
6. Companies that are certified are responsible for all employees and are responsible for training those employees. It is recommended that individual employees become Certified WaterWise Professionals.
7. Three or more valid complaints by customers about an individual or company will be grounds for removal from the WaterWise Professionals list.

For more information call Karen Stewart, Water Conservation Specialist at (512) 974-2978.



WaterWise Irrigation

Professional



***WaterWise Professional Certification Application
(For Licensed Irrigators only within the Austin ETJ)
Must be filled out each year. Not for seminar registration***

City of Austin Water Conservation

Please print clearly:

Applicant's Name _____

Job Title _____ Irrigator's License Number _____

Business name _____

Commercial installations Residential installations

Business address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Business phone number _____ pager or mobile _____

E-mail Address _____

WaterWise Certified Professional last year? yes no

Please check all that apply:

Landscape maintenance Landscape Contractor Irrigation installation Irrigation repairs

Other _____

Accepting new clients Not accepting new clients

The City of Austin will provide water customers with a list of WaterWise Professionals to choose from for repairs or installations. You will receive a certificate to display at your business.



WaterWise Irrigation Professional



WaterWise Irrigation Program Agreement

I _____, a licensed irrigator, agree to comply with the City of Austin’s water conservation WaterWise Irrigation Program, by assisting customers with reducing peak day water demand in the summer months. I agree to adhere to the COA Ordinance Article II, Chapter 4-2 of the City Code Stage 1 and Stage II Water Use Management Criteria, and the water waste** provisions:

Systems may not be operated that have broken sprinkler heads, or with leaking valves. Permanently installed irrigation systems with broken heads, with a head that is out of adjustment and spraying more than 10% of the spray on a street or parking lot, or that mist are a violation of the water waste ordinance. Irrigation systems must not allow a substantial amount of irrigation water to run off a property or to pond in the street or parking lot to a depth greater than 1/4 of an inch.

If the City of Austin reaches Stage II Water Use Management Criteria, I will assist my customers in following the mandatory water conservation schedule.

To the best of my ability:

- I will maintain and install systems that limit watering hard surfaces and waste of water.**
- I will install water conservation devices: MPR heads, drip irrigation, check valves, rain shut-off devices and manual flow control valves.
- I will install and maintain systems at proper operating pressure.
- I will recommend City of Austin Water Conservation Programs when appropriate.
- I will follow manufacturer’s recommendations for head spacing (head-to-head).
- I will install controllers that have multiple programs, multiple start times, and are 5-day programmable and promote the five-day watering calendar.
- I will help the customer develop a water budget, for that property, based on irrigated area.

Signed

_____ Irrigator’s License Number _____

_____ Date _____

Printed name

(For City of Austin Use Only)

Date Received _____

Approved (date) By _____

WaterWise Irrigation Seminar, Thursday, February 26, 2004

**LBJ Wildflower Center
4801 LaCrosse Ave 8 am – 5 pm**

**SEMINAR REGISTRATION ONLY PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY
RETURN THIS SLIP WITH REGISTRATION FEE. FILL OUT ONE PER PERSON
NO REGISTRATIONS OR FEES WILL BE ACCEPTED AT THE DOOR!**

Sign up early space is limited! Deadline February 20, 2004

Make the Check out to City of Austin, there will be no refunds.

Applicant's Name _____ Irrigator's License Number _____

Business name _____ Job Title _____

Business address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Please send my registration confirmation to this address (if different than above):

Business phone number _____ pager or mobile _____

Email address: _____

____ I install/repair irrigation systems in the City of Austin, I have included my WWIP certification application and signed agreement so that my company can be listed on the WWIP list.

____ I have included \$50 check or money order for 8 CEU's.

Lunch will be assorted sandwiches with vegetarian option.

I have special dietary needs: (please explain) _____

Mail checks or money orders City of Austin Water Conservation PO Box 1088, Austin

Tx 78767

Or to our office at 625 E 10th Suite 615
Questions? 974-2978