TDOC Z TA245.7 B873 NO.5015

# Agricultural

# **Extension Service**

# Landscape Development for Texas Coastal Areas

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Landscape development for homes and businesses along the Texas coast can pose unique challenges. Plant establishment, growth and development are exposed to drying winds, heat and salt, not to mention insects and diseases. Occasional droughts, severe freezes and porous, sandy soil can add further obstacles to success.

To compensate for these problems and develop a successful landscape, wise plant selection and careful attention to improving environmental conditions through windbreaks, thorough soil preparation, proper after-planting care and efficient irrigation practices are essential. There are no hard and fast rules since conditions vary from location to location. Some experimentation will be necessary, but by following the principles given below, your chances for success will be greatly increased.

### Start with a plan

The starting point for every successful landscape is a good plan, preferably on paper and not just in your mind. The process involved in drawing up a landscape design will 1) help you understand, organize and develop your site for the best use and enjoyment; 2) create a visual relationship between the house and the site;

County Extension Agent-Horticulture and Extension Horticulturist

This publication is designed to aid those most directly affected by the rigors of living in close proximity to the Gulf Coast. Both those within walking distance of the water and residents further inland should find useful information on coping with landscape plant establishment and maintenance.

and 3) reduce the overall maintenance level.

A professional landscape architect can greatly assist you in the design process. Help can be as simple as generating ideas for your site to as detailed as a completed blueprint design and help with installation.

The steps involved in drawing up a plan begin with a base plan. The base plan (a scale drawing) includes all the major features of the property including the house, property lines, easements, existing walks, drives, fences, trees, etc. The base plan should also indicate compass and prevailing wind directions. Once this plan is completed, you can place tracing paper over it and sketch many possible ideas and solutions to your landscape needs and problems.

To help organize your thoughts, list which things are needed to satisfy your requirements and lifestyle. Study your site to determine where shade and wind protection are needed; where privacy is desired; and which open views to be preserved. Main areas for development may include a children's play area, a work or service area, outdoor entertaining and the area that the public will see and use. Realize the limitations of your site because of proximity to the coast and plan accordingly.

When considering how to develop the site, don't be guided by a stereotyped concept that landscaping should consist of introduced broadleaf evergreen trees and shrubs arranged in traditional or formal ways. Be sure to preserve, as much as possible, any existing vegetation including trees, shrubs, vines and grasses. These native plants are naturally adapted to the difficult coastal conditions. Every effort should be made to incorporate them into the design wherever possible.

Keep in mind that a landscape is not just a group of plants arranged in a certain way. Design is a problem-solving process. By applying known principles of design to parking, pedestrian circulation, and creation of privacy and outdoor living areas, an environment that is functional and attractive can be developed.

An existing site can be greatly improved through creative placement of attractive structures such as shelters or gazebos; decks and paths of treated wood, brick or decorative pavers; a strategically placed sculpture or a small water feature. This can simplify the diffi-

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difficult job of trying to establish plants in an harsh environment.

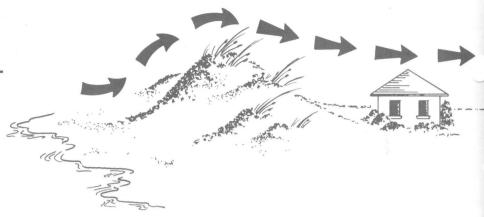
## Windbreaks

The variety of plants that can be successfully used along the coast increases substantially as protection increases from prevailing wind, blowing sand and salt spray. Living or constructed windbreaks, walls, fences, buildings or other structures allow many plants to be successfully grown in the lee (area protected from the wind) which would otherwise fail in more exposed locations.

The adverse effects of buffeting winds tend to decrease as one moves away from the immediate coast. For this reason, the plant list in this publication is divided into two zones or belts based on proximity to the coast. This will aid in choosing plants for different exposures.

A windbreak consists of any type of barrier designed to slow down the velocity and redirect the flow of wind. A good windbreak will not create excessive turbulence or wind eddies. Effective windbreaks do not stop the wind, but break its forward movement to slow it down. Solid barriers such as walls and buildings create unexpected wind currents and wind tunnels, often with increased velocity and unpredictable direction. Windbreaks composed of living plants allow some of the wind to slowly penetrate, making them more effective.

Examples of windbreak materials include picket and board fences



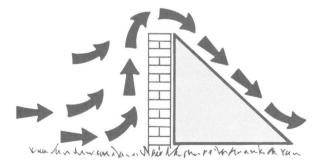
Landscaped berm or dune redirects and slows wind

designed with gaps between pickets, berms, natural sand dunes and rows or hedges of plants. Temporary windbreaks made out of snow fencing, 60 percent shade cloth or other materials can be used until a permanent screen can be established.

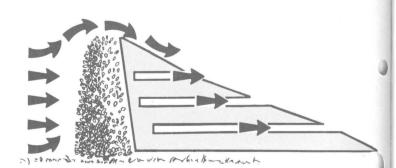
The lee produced by a windbreak is proportional to the height of the barrier. Areas closest to the windbreak will be the calmest, with wind velocity gradually increasing with distance from the windbreak.

The effective zone of protection created by a windbreak is approximately 25 times its height, although maximum protection wind reduction occurs in a range of 5 to 8 times the height of the screen. Therefore, if planning a windbreak 25 feet tall, it should be located 125 to 200 feet (5 to 8 times 25 feet) from the house or area to be protected for maximum utility. A 10-foot windbreak provides maximum protection to 75 feet and some reduction of wind (about 10 percent) up to 250 feet. The following criteria are helpful in planning an effective windbreak:

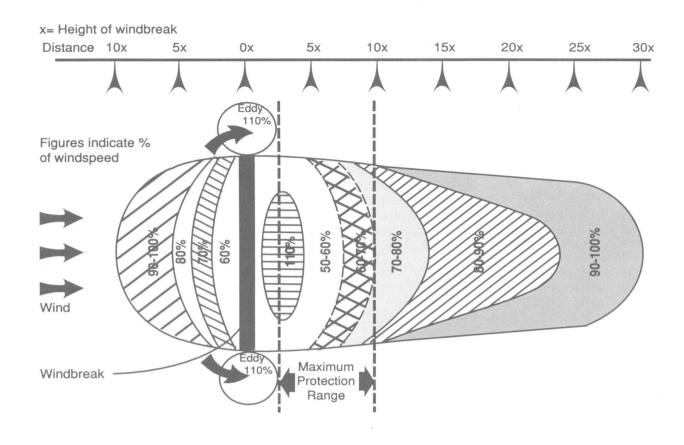
- The optimum solid space or foliage density for the windbreak is about 60 percent. Fences with 1 inch pickets and 1 inch gaps would meet this condition.
- Windbreaks are most effective when they extend to the ground. Do not remove lower branches of trees and shrubs.
- The depth of the planting is important as it relates to the ability of wind to penetrate. For most evergreen plants, two or three rows are sufficient, but for deciduous plants four or five rows may be necessary. Rows should be staggered.
- For small properties, a wellmaintained hedge, wider at the base, would serve as an effective windbreak.



The effect of a solid windbreak on air flow



The effect of a penetrable windbreak on air blow



Effect of windbreak on reduction of windspeed

Where space allows, wide windbreaks can be designed to lift wind up and away. You can mimic nature by starting with low growing plants on the windward side and increasing height within the rows. For example, the first row might be pampas grass or oleander; the second, giant reed or pittosporum; and the third row, tamarisk or other tree species.

When selecting plants for a windbreak, choose only the hardiest. Species occurring naturally along the coast are the best candidates since these have proved themselves to be adapted to this harsh environment. Observe local landscapes for good examples of hardy plants.

# Soil preparation

Nearly every soil can be improved to increase plant health and conserve water. Both sandy coastal soils and heavier clay soils benefit from the addition of large quantities of organic matter such as shredded pine bark, peat, rice hulls and compost. This will increase the soil's ability to absorb and store both water and nutrients in a form available to the plants. A 4-inch layer of organic matter mixed in with the soil at planting time will aid in the establishment of shrubs and trees. Flower beds and gardens can be amended every time they are replanted.

In sandy soil, strategic planting areas can be modified by incorporating top soil or loam. Make a gradual transition from sand to loam by mixing the first layer of top soil with the sand.

## Plant selection

Trees, shrubs and groundcovers should be selected and located with care since the coastal environment is very harsh and unforgiving. Use locally native plants as much as possible, and keep in mind the effects of proximity to the coast. The more your site is exposed to the wind and salt water, the fewer plants there will be to choose from.

The table in this publication contains a list of plants for the entire Texas coastal area. These plants have been tried and tested and will grow in most locations as indicated. Care should be exercised in selecting plants for your area since some plants on the list may be prone to freeze damage under certain circumstances.

The table is broken into two zones or belts based on proximity to the coast. Zone 1 indicates areas near the shore with the most exposure to wind and salt spray. Zone 2 is where there is more protection from the elements. The table also lists plants according to their cold hardiness and identifies them for use on the upper, middle or lower Texas coast. Use these classifications as general guidelines since every situation will be different.

Annual flower beds in strategically located protected areas will provide pockets of color to enhance the landscape. These will need to be replaced several times a year to look their best.

Your local nursery professionals or county Extension agent can help in the selection and description of plants for your area.

### Maintenance

#### Watering

All plants must receive very good care during the first year or two after planting. They must not suffer a setback due to lack of water. A well-designed irrigation system is essential for continued care of the landscape. Sprinkler irrigation is important for lawns, groundcovers and low growing shrubs since accumulated salt spray can be washed off the plant leaves. Salt on leaves is one of the most damaging factors for non-halophilic plants, so the ability to wash off salts, especially after storms, is important.

Drip or trickle irrigation is one method to increase watering efficiency in many parts of the landscape. Drip systems apply water under low pressure, slowly delivering water through emitters, bubblers or spray heads to the root zone of the plants without waste from overwatering, runoff or applying water where there is no root system. For areas with high salt content in the water, drip irrigation allows better use of this water since less salt is applied to the plants. Drip systems are ideal for shrub, perennial and annual flower beds, vegetable gardens and for establishing trees.

Seek professional irrigation advice for sprinkler systems and experiment with available drip irrigation products in small sections of the landscape to become familiar with this water-saving technique.

For details on drip systems and landscape water conservation, refer to Texas Agricultural Extension Service publication B-1496 -*Efficient Use of Water in the Garden and Landscape* and B-1584 - *Landscape Water Conservation...Xeriscape.* 

#### Mulches

The use of mulch conserves moisture and aids in establishment and maintenance of plants. Mulch is a layer of material covering the soil surface around plants. Organic mulches such as pine bark, compost, wood chips and grass clippings not only conserve moisture but increase the organic content of the soil as they decompose. Organic mulches need to be periodically replenished. Inorganic mulches include lava rock, limestone, pea gravel and permeable landscape fabrics (not sheet plastic).

Mulch around plants reduces evaporation of water from the soil and keeps the soil temperature more moderate, thus creating a more favorable growing environment. Mulch also suppresses weed growth which competes with plants for water, nutrients and light.

### Fertility

Most native and many adapted exotic plants require little supplemental fertilization to grow and survive. However, judicious applications of slow release or organic fertilizers in the spring can help maintain healthy plants which will be less prone to stress or injury due to heat, drought or cold. Slow release fertilizers are available over a longer period of time and are less prone to leaching through porous sand. Lawn grasses will need frequent, light applications to remain vigorous and dense.

#### Acknowledgment

Thanks to the National Park Service and Dianne Crouch, Master Gardener, for contributing art for this publication.

# **Table Of Landscape Plants**

Key - Hardiness: U=Upper Coast, M=Middle Coast, L=Lower Coast, All=All areas Light: S=Sun, Sh=Shade, E=Either

Zone: 1=Areas directly affected by wind and salt spray; 2=Areas with some protection (see text for more explanation)

Common name	Scientific name	Hardiness	Light	Zone	Notes
	GROU	JND COVERS			
sparagus, Sprengeri fern	Asparagus densiflorus 'Sprengeri'	L,M	S	1	Root hardy
lgerian Ivy	Hedera canariensis	All	Sh	1	Needs shade & some wind protection
oats-foot Morning Glory	Ipomoea pes-caprae	All	S	1	Native, excellent dune stabilizer
railing Lantana	Lantana montevidensis	All	S	1	Attractive purple flowers, root hardy
rginia Creeper	Parthenocissus quinquefolia	All	E	1	Clings to walls, fall color, winter berries
tonecrop	Sedum acre	All	S	1	Other species such as S. potosinum also good
siatic Jasmine	Trachelospermum asiaticum	L,M	E	1	Low evergreen groundcover
onfederate Jasmine	Trachelospermum jasminoides	L,M	E	1	Fragrant, white spring flowers, evergree
edelia	Wedelia trilobata	L,M	S	1	Perennial with yellow flowers, mowable

Common name	Scientific name	Hardiness	Light	Zone	Notes
Shore, Blue Pacific Juniper	Juniperus conferta	All	S	2	Needs good drainage
Lily Turf, Liriope	Liriope spicata, L. muscari	All	Sh	2	Needs shade and some wind protection
Japanese, Purpleleaf Honeysuckle	Lonicera japonica	All	S	2	Easily grown but can be aggressive
Mondo or Monkey Grass	Ophiopogon japonicus	All	Sh	2	Needs some shade
		VINES			
Virginia Creeper	Parthenocissus quinquefolia	All	E	1	Clings to walls, fall color, winter berries
Cape Honeysuckle	Tecomaria capensis	L,M	S	1	Bright orange flowers attracts humming- birds
Bougainvillea	Bougainvillea spectabilis	L,M	S	2	Top may freeze, many colors
Trumpet Vine	Campsis radicans	All	Е	2	Spring & summer orange blooms, rampant growth
English Ivy	Hedera helix	All	Sh	2	Needs shade
Coral Vine	Antigonon leptopus	All	S	2	Pink summer bloom, root hardy
Fig Ivy, Creeping Fig	Ficus pumila	All	E	2	Clings to walls
Carolina Jessamine	Gelsemium sempervirens	All	E	2	Yellow spring flowers
		PERENNIALS			
Yarrow	Achillea millefolium	All	E		Attractive foliage and flowers
Hinkley's Columbine	Aquilegia hinkleyana	All	Sh		Yellow spring flowers, blue-gray foliage
Southernwood	Artemisia abrotanum	All	S		Green, feathery foliage
Butterfly Weed	Asclepias tuberosa	All	S		Summer yellow/red flowers
Autumn Aster	Aster oblongifolius	All	S		Lavender fall flowers
Canna	Canna X generalis	All	S		Herbaceous, leafy perennial; red, pink and yellow summer bloom
Shasta Daisy	Chrysanthemum maximum	All	S		White spring flowers
Garden Mum	Chrysanthemum morifolium	All	S		Several colors of fall flowers
Baby Sun Coreopsis	Coreopsis grandiflora	All	S		Yellow/orange summer flowers
Milk and Wine Lilies	Crinum hybrids	All	S		Recurring bloom of pink, white, red flowers from clump of large strap leaves; excellent on coast
Montbretia	Crocosmia Pottsii	All	S		Gladiolus relative; orange-red early summe
Cigar Plant	Cuphea micropetala	All	S		Red/yellow flowers late summer and fall
Purple Coneflower	Echinacea purpurea	All	S		Purple flowers spring through fall
Perennial Ageratum	Eupatorium coelestinum	All	S		Lavender-blue flowers summer - fall
Indian Blanket	Gaillardia spp.	All	S		Red-yellow blend spring - fall
Gerbera	<i>Gerbera</i> spp.	All	E		Needs good soil preparation, protection from afternoon sun and wind; many colors spring - fall
Baby Gladiolus	Gladiolus Byzantinus	All	S		Purple or white spring flowers
Firebush	Hamelia patens	All	S		Very heat tolerant; red flowers summer - fal
Maximilian Sunflower	Helianthus maximiliana	All	S		Yellow flowers late summer - fall
Daylily	Hemerocallis	AII	S		Many colors of flowers spring - summer
Spring Star Flower	Ipheion uniflorum	All	S		Blue spring flowers
Louisiana Iris	Iris hybrids	All	S		Rich soil, fall - spring moisture required; several colors of spring flowers
Shrimp Plant	Justicia brandegeana	All	Е		Yellow or reddish - brown flowers summer - fall
Trailing Lantana	Lantana montevidensis	All	S		Purple flowers spring - fall
Lantana	Lantana spp.	All	S		Heat and drought tolerant; many colors of flowers spring - fall, attracts butterflies
Red Spider Lily	Lycoris radiata	All	S		Red, white or yellow flowers in fall
Turk's Cap	Malvaviscus arboreus, M. a. va Drummondii	r. All	E		Red flowers summer - fall; attracts hummingbirds

Common name	Scientific name	Hardiness	Light	Zone	Notes
Peppermint	Mentha piperita	All	Sh		Rich soil and plenty of moisture required
Varcissus	Narcissus spp.	All	S		Small flowered varieties naturalize the bes
Oxalis	Oxalis crassipes	All	S		Pink spring - summer flowers
Rock Rose	Pavonia lasiopetala	All	S		Drought resistant; pink spring - fall flowers
Perennial Phlox	Phlox paniculata	All	S		Lavender, pink or white summer flowers
Dbedient Plant	Physostegia virginiana	All	S		Lavender or white summer and fall flowers
Blue Plumbago	Plumbago auriculata	All	E		Blue flowers summer - fall
Oxblood Lily	Rhodophiala bifida	All	S		Dark red flowers in early fall
Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis	L,M	S		Aromatic foliage, blue flowers summer - fa
Mexican Petunia	Ruellia Brittoniana	All	S		Very drought tolerant; blue-purple flowers spring - fall; invasive
Blue Shade	<i>Ruellia</i> sp.	All	E		Drought tolerant groundcover with blue flowers
lealy Cup Sage	Salvia farinacea	All	S		Drought tolerant; blue or white flowers spring - fall; 'Victoria' dwarf form
Autumn or Cherry Sage	Salvia greggii	All	S		Drought tolerant; white, red or pink flowers spring - fall
Santolina, Lavender Cotton	Santolina sp.	All	S		Drought tolerant; needs good drainage
Purple Heart	Setcreasea pallida	All	S		Drought and heat tolerant; source of purple foliage
lexican Marigold Mint, Yerba Anise	Tagetes lucida	All	S		Yellow flowers fall, aromatic foliage
Common Thyme	Thyme vulgaris	All	S		Evergreen, spreading aromatic herb
/erbena, Sand Verbena	<i>Verbena</i> spp.	All	S		Heat tolerant, spreading plant with range of colors spring - fall
Rain Lily	Zephyranthes spp.	All	S		Summer blooming bulbs of white and pink
	×	SHRUBS			
SMALL SHRUBS (1 to 5 feet tall)					
Century Plant	Agave americana	All	S	1	Drought tolerant, good as specimen
Pampas Grass	Cortaderia selloana	All	S	1	Easily grown 5' to 7' tall
Prickly Pear	Opuntia spp.	All	S	1	Spineless forms most useful
Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis	L,M	S	1	Prostrate and upright forms, can freeze
Yucca (many varieties)	Yucca spp.	All	S	1	Extremely tough, heat, drought and salt tolerant
Abelia	Abelia grandiflora	All	E	2	Bronze evergreen foliage, white flowers
Agarito	Berberis trifoliolata	All	E	2	Spiny leaves, yellow flowers, red fruit
American Beautyberry	Callicarpa americana	All	E	2	Clusters of purple fruit, attracts birds, best in shade
Sago Palm	Cycas revoluta	L,M	E	2	Slow growing, good as specimen
Coralbean	Erythrina herbacea	L,M	E	2	Attractive spikes of red flowers; perennial upper coast
Fatsia	Fatsia japonica	All	Sh	2	Needs shade, wind protection
Red Yucca	Hesperaloe parvifolia	All	E	2	Red flowers on tall spikes
St. John's Wort, Hypericum	Hypericum spp.	All	E	2	Needs some shade, wind protection
Dwarf Yaupon Holly	llex vomitoria 'Nana', 'Stokes Dwarf'	All	E	2	Glossy evergreen foliage
Juniper, many varieties	Juniperus chinensis cvs.	All	S	2	Several forms of tough evergreen shrubs
Oleander	Nerium oleander	L,M	S	2	Drought tolerant summer bloomer, can be used in Zone 1
Indian Hawthorn	Raphiolepis indica	All	E	2	Spring flowering, blue berries in fall, ever-

Common name	Scientific name	Hardiness	Light	Zone	Notes
MEDIUM SHRUBS (6 to 9 feet tal	0				
Elaeagnus	Elaeagnus pungens	All	S	1	Grey-leaved shrub; small, fragrant flowers
Wax Myrtle	Myrica cerifera	All	S	1	Native to Texas coast
Pittosporum	Pittosporum tobira	L	E	1	Glossy foliage, fragrant flowers
Bamboo	Bambusa	All	S	2	Clumping types less aggressive
Bird of Paradise Bush	Caesalpinia gilliesii	All	S	2	Attractive summer red and yellow flowers
Hollywood Twisted Juniper	Juniperus chinensis 'Torulosa', 'Hollywood'	All	S	2	Large, upright evergreen shrub with unsymmetrical growth
Ligustrum, Glossy Privet	Ligustrum lucidum	All	E	2	Large evergreen shrub or small tree
Waxleaf Ligustrum	Ligustrum japonicum	All	E	2	Large evergreen shrub
Oleander	Nerium oleander	L,M	S	2	Drought tolerant summer bloomer, can be used in Zone 1
Texas Sage, Ceniza	Leucophyllum spp.	All	S	2	Needs good drainage
Arborvitae	Thuja spp.	All	S	2	Symmetrical evergreen shrub
Common Myrtle	Myrtus communis	All	S	2	Small leaves, evergreen
LARGE SHRUBS (greater than 1	0 feet)				
Feijoa or Pineapple Guava	Feijoa sellowiana	All	S	2	Large shrub or small tree
Yaupon Holly	llex vomitoria	All	E	2	Large shrub or small tree, glossy evergree foliage, fall red berries
Oleander	Nerium oleander	L,M	S	2	Drought tolerant summer bloomer, can be used in Zone 1
Japanese Yew	Podocarpus macrophylla	All	E	2	Large, upright evergreen shrub
Arborvitae	Thuja spp.	All	S	2	Symmetrical evergreen shrub
		TREES			
SMALL TREES					
Chinaberry, Texas Umbrella	Melia azedarach	All	S	1	Brittle wood yet grows well on barrier islands
Huisache	Acacia farnesiana	All	S	2	Yellow spring bloom, thorny
Texas Persimmon	Diospyros texana	All	S	2	Handsome trunks, black fruit on female - good wildlife food
Southern Golden Raintree	Koelreuteria bipinnata	L,M	S	2	Fast growth, handsome fall seed pods
Mulberry	Morus alba	All	S	2	Fast growth, invasive roots
Mesquite	Prosopis glandulosa	All	S	2	Light green, lacy look; takes wind well
Lavender Chaste Tree, Vitex	Vitex agnus-castus	All	S	2	Small tree, lavender bloom in spring
Camphor Tree	Cinnamonum camphora	L,M	S	2	Evergreen
Citrus	<i>Citrus</i> spp.	L	S	2	Cold hardiness varies among types; some types may be grown on the upper and mid dle coast (e.g., mandarins, tangelos and kumquats)
Loquat	Eriobotrya japonica	All	S	2	Large leaves, edible fruit
Retama	Parkinsonia aculeata	All	S	2	Makes light shade; yellow flowers
Japanese Black Pine	Pinus thunbergia	All	S	2	Evergreen, interesting form
ARGE TREES					
Australian Pine	Causarina stricta	L	S	1	Freezes mid-20s
Famarisk, Salt Cedar	Tamarix spp.	L,M	S	1	Freezes upper teens
Deodar Cedar	Cedrus deodar	Ali	S	2	Pyramidal form
Arizona Cypress	Cupressus glabra	All	S	2	Evergreen, useful for windbreaks
Live Oak	Quercus virginiana	All	S	2	Evergreen, spreading tree
Eucalyptus	Eucalyptus spp.	L	S	2	May freeze, select most hardy spp. (e.g., E. rostrata, camaldulensis, microtheca)

Common name	Scientific name	Hardiness	Light	Zone	Notes
Cottonwood	Populus deltoides	All	S	2	Fast but weak growth; takes wind
Bald Cypress, Montezuma Cypress	Taxodium distichum, T. mucronatum	All	S	2	Deciduous conifer (T. mucronatum tends to stay evergreen L,M); long-lived
		PALMS			
Palmetto Palm	Sabal minor	All	E	1	Very short, hardy fan palm
Texas Palmetto	Sabal texana	All	S	1	Hardy, very cold tolerant fan plam; slow growing
Cabbage or Florida Palmetto	Sabal palmetto	All	S	1	Hardy, very cold tolerant; slow growing, long-lived fan palm
Washington Fan Palm	Washingtonia filifera and hybrids	L,M	S	1	Fan palm, may freeze; hardier than W. robusta
Pindo Palm	Butia capitata	All	S	2	Slow growing, hardy feather palm
European Fan Palm	Chamaerops humilis	L,M	S	2	Hardy, low, clustering fan palm
Phoenix or Canary Island Date Palm	Phoenix canariensis	L,M	S	2	Large, slow growing feather palm; may freeze in M
	GRASSES F	OR LAWN AN	D TURF		
Buffalograss	Buchloe dactyloides	L,M	S		Does best on clay or loamy soil in areas with low rainfall, most drought tolerant
Bermuda grass	Cynodon dactylon	All	S		Common on coast
St. Augustine grass	Stenotaphrum secundatum	All	E		Requires most water to maintain
Zoysia grass	Zoysia japonica	All	E		Slow spreading
Seashore Paspalum, Adalayd	Paspalum vaginatum	All	S		High tolerance to salt
	NATIVE AND ORNAMENT	AL GRASSES	FOR RO	UGH AI	REAS
Sea Coast Blue Stem	Andropogon scoparius	All	S	1	
Salt Grass	Distichlis spicata	All	S	1	
Lindheimer's Muhly Grass	Muhlenbergia Lindheimeri	All	S	2	
Sand Knotgrass	Paspalum distichum	All	S	1	
Fountain Grass	Pennisetum setaceum	All	S	2	Several cultivars including Purple Fountai Grass
Giant Seaoats	Uniola paniculata	All	S	1	Valuable native, soil/dune stabilizer; ornamental seed heads



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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Zerle L. Carpenter, Director, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System.