



## “Currents” December 2022

### **Water Conservation in Cold Weather**

When people in Texas talk about water conservation and drought it usually evokes images of brown lawns, empty swimming pools, and triple digit temperatures. However, water conservation should be a focus all year long and is not restricted to the hot summer months. There are many techniques you can implement during the winter to help you save money and water.

Despite the precipitation we have been getting recently, all of Kerr County is still in a moderate to extreme drought. 2022 has been one of the driest years in over a century according to the National Integrated Drought Information System. January and February tend to be our driest months and that trend will likely continue in 2023. Forecasters at NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center issue a winter outlook each fall, and they have predicted a drier than average winter for central Texas.

One of the easiest ways you can conserve water in the winter is by watering your plants less often. Most plants go dormant in winter and stop growing to conserve energy, water, and nutrients. The plants also prepare for the freezing temperatures by moving water out of their cells and moving glucose in as a form of natural antifreeze. Since you won’t need to water your plants regularly, drain your irrigation system at the start of winter. This will prepare your system for freezing temperatures and prevent leaks due to cracking. All exposed pipes, spigots, water features, and pumps should be wrapped or drained to save you from having to do expensive repairs down the road. Inside the home, you can protect your pipes from freezing by opening under sink cabinet doors, and during extremely low temperatures, let the faucet drip. It might seem counterintuitive that letting a faucet drip will conserve water, but it is a small amount compared to what would be wasted by a burst pipe. You can also collect the water from the dripping faucet to water your indoor plants.

These techniques will help conserve water by preventing cracks and leaks in your plumbing. A good practice after it’s been cold enough to employ those tactics is to inspect your outdoor pipes and fixtures for any signs of failure. Also, make sure you know where the water shut-off valves are located, so you can divert water from areas that need to be repaired.

A good way to upgrade your outdoor watering system and save even more water and money is to install a rainwater catchment system. The wettest months in Texas are in the spring, so installing a system now will give the tank time to fill up before summer. UGRA has a rainwater catchment rebate program with the goal of promoting water conservation and watershed stewardship. It is available to anyone with a Kerr County address, and we will reimburse 50% of your costs up to \$500. You must have installed or upgraded your system within the last 12 months to be eligible. Please visit our website at [www.ugra.org/major-initiatives/rainwater-catchment](http://www.ugra.org/major-initiatives/rainwater-catchment) to learn more and apply today!

### **Let’s Keep Our River Clean**

*Shelby Taber, Natural Resources Manager for UGRA, [staber@ugra.org](mailto:staber@ugra.org) or (830) 896-5445*