



# keep denton beautiful

## *Yard of the Month Program*

### **Overview**

Keep Denton Beautiful operates a Yard of the Month Program from March through October each year (8 months). The city is divided into 8 geographical sections (Northeast, Northwest, Central, East, Southeast, Southern rings north to south: South-ring 1, South-ring 2, South-ring 3) and each section is assigned a volunteer judge. Each judge reviews public nominations for yards in their zone and then selects a top yard to award. Once the winner has contacted KDB, they will receive a sign in their yard for a month. Judges place the signs and take pictures.

### **Basic Requirements**

In order for Keep Denton Beautiful to effectively operate the Yard of the Month Program, each volunteer judge will need the following:

- A working email address that will be checked on a regular basis, to receive nominations for his/her assigned area; and to submit winning selections to KDB staff.
- A working knowledge of the geographical area assigned and/or the capability to locate nominated yards via map.
- Reliable transportation in order to drive his/her assigned area and judge yards.
- Be available to judge yards each month for 8 months, consistently selecting the top yard in their geographical area.

### **Overall Time Commitment**

Each volunteer judge commits to an 8 month Yard of the Month cycle. Judging responsibilities begin in late February with training and the selection of winning yards by the end of March. Judging responsibilities end in October with the final nomination of the top yard for each area. Each judging term will last only one calendar year. Each year will bring the opportunity for new judges to participate. In the event that there are vacancies after veteran judges have made a commitment to the program, new judges will be recruited.

### **Program Details with Monthly Timeline**

- On approximately the 15<sup>th</sup> day of each month—KDB staff will send out an email to all judges with nominations for their assigned areas.
- Once judges have received their nominations, each judge (or judges) will choose a time to drive to their assigned area, judging each nominated yard based on the evaluation tool provided. If possible, a yard will be selected from those nominated. If there are no nominations, or no suitable yards among the nominations, a judge may select another yard within the assigned area. Also, if nominations are down for a given month, judges may be asked to nominate yards from a different zone in an effort to boost nominations.

- One week prior to the start of the next month—Judges will view all public nominations, place a **NOMINATION** door hanger on the door, pick their top yard, place the **WINNER door hanger** and email KDB staff a photo and the address at volunteer@kdb.org.
- At least 3 days prior to the start of the month, KDB staff will email the judges if their winners have called to accept the award. KDB staff will communicate the winner's name and contact information, so that the judge may schedule a time to place the sign and take another picture to send to KDB.
- Judges will also submit a brief description of the winning yard including plant species, notable features, and anything the owner wishes to share about their property.
- 15th of the next month—Winning yard(s) with photos and short write-up will be posted on the KDB Facebook page and newsletter.
- Judges may work as a team if so desired – please let KDB staff know if this is the case.
- All judges will be provided with a scorecard to assist them in choosing a winner each month.

### ***Yard(s) of the Month Criteria***

- The property is well-groomed. Properties can have a natural, "wildscape" appearance, but lawns must be mowed, and the perimeter of the property must be edged.
- The property is attractive and pleasing to the eye (e.g. green lawn; a variety of plants such as trees, shrubs, ground cover, flowers, wildflowers; plants with a variety of heights, textures, and colors; landscape features such as fountains, large rocks in beds, etc.)
- Buildings, fences, porches, and patios on the property are required to be in good repair, i.e. minimal distraction from the landscape due to deterioration, damage or construction.
- The property is free of litter, junk, and debris, has no appliances or indoor furniture on porches or patios, is free of junked or inoperable vehicles, and has no parking on the lawn.
- **BONUS:** The property owner has invested extra effort through the use of attractive art pieces (e.g. pottery, ironwork), potted plants, birdhouses, patio or lawn furniture, windsocks, decorative mailboxes, etc. Natural landscape should be the primary focus.
- A yard cannot win more than **once every three years**. Judges will be provided a list of all winners for the last three years at the start of the judging term. It is the responsibility of the judge to ensure that they do not select a yard that has won within the past three years.

### ***Basic Guidelines for Choosing a Water Smart Yard***

- Grass lawns are very thirsty and consume a lot of water. Try to pick properties with less grass lawn. Some may even have NO lawn at all!
- Yards that use water-efficient plants are good candidates. These include native Texas plants, as well as Texas adapted plants. A few examples include virtually any daisy, Wine Cup, Yucca, Lantana, and Texas Sage.
- The use of native grasses is almost always a winner!
- The presence of wildlife is a big indicator such as birds, butterflies, squirrels etc.
- Trees standing in a ground-cover bed are more water efficient than those standing in grass lawn alone.

- Some yards may also have a multitude of pathways and beds. Pathways contribute to water conservation; they enhance the visual texture while minimizing the area that requires water. Some examples of pathway materials might be pea gravel, stone, and mulch.
- Look for shrubs in their natural state. Over-pruning for a long period of time results in increased use of water.
- If you can see that the concrete surrounding a house is receiving as much water as the yard, you know this is not Water Smart!
- If you think your outstanding yard might be Water Smart but you aren't sure, ask us! We will let you know if it is indeed Water Smart.
- \*\* Visit [www.TxSmartScape.com](http://www.TxSmartScape.com) for great water smart landscaping tips!

I understand the responsibilities of the Yard of the Month Judge position and am available for the full term.