



# Grow Zones and Targeted Access Along Creeks & Rivers

**ACROSS THE CENTRAL TEXAS HILL COUNTRY**, private landowners, businesses, housing developments and public parks are establishing “Grow Zones” along creeks and rivers to protect the land and water. Grow Zones are specific areas where disturbances, such as excessive mowing and foot traffic, are proactively restricted to allow native plants to thrive. Livestock producers may also create Grow Zones with the use of cross-fencing and development of alternative, off-channel watering.

When Grow Zones are located along a creek or river—in what is referred to as the riparian zone—deep-rooted riparian vegetation provides enhanced riverbank stability, fish and wildlife habitat, natural beauty, and water quality.

## LEFT:

Native riparian plants make a beautiful and protective border between water and land.

## RIGHT:

Decks and docks bordered by deep-rooted plants can provide easy and safe water access and enjoyment.

Grow Zones are more resilient than manicured landscapes and recover more quickly from flooding and heavy rainfall. While a Grow Zone with a minimum width of 30 feet from the water's edge begins to provide the optimum suite of functions, a width of even five to ten feet will provide some degree of bank stabilization, wildlife habitat, and filtering runoff for water quality.

Establishing Grow Zones does not mean losing recreational access to the river. Rather, by creating targeted access points to the water and interspersing them with Grow Zones, landowners can reap the benefits of fish and wildlife habitat, reduced erosion, and continued access.





#### LEFT:

Even constructed access can be supported and surrounded by riparian plants all the way down to the water's edge.

#### RIGHT:

Each steward will manage their property based on their own unique goals and values. Here, a landowner incorporated a manicured aesthetic with a Grow Zone and targeted access to the river.

When determining where to establish targeted access points to a creek or river, land stewards may account for:



**Existing infrastructure**  
like steps, flat rocks,  
decks or docks.



**Compacted areas deemed**  
appropriate "sacrifice"  
areas for continued access



**Places where the**  
riverbank is not an  
overly steep cut-bank

## Ready to establish a Grow Zone?

Land stewards may create Grow Zones simply by ceasing the source of disturbance—stop mowing, walking, and driving. Keep livestock out and control invasive species. Alternatively, landowners can actively boost nature by broadcasting native seeds or transplanting native riparian species to jumpstart restoration and increase species diversity.

If there is a concern that mowing or maintenance may inadvertently intrude into the Grow Zone, land stewards may consider installing a small border along the edge, such as a line of rock or cedar logs laid end to end for clear delineation.



**We invite you to learn more at:**  
[HillCountryAlliance.org/RiparianManagement](https://HillCountryAlliance.org/RiparianManagement)