



City of San Diego  
RESIDENTIAL OUTDOOR WATER CONSERVATION  
REBATE PROGRAM

Sustainable Landscape-Turf  
Replacement Rebate Guidelines  
Rebate--\$1.25 or \$1.50/SF up to \$2,000

**Note: This program is seasonal. Applications accepted if post-marked September 1<sup>st</sup> – March 31<sup>st</sup> only.**

This program is seasonal and requires that planting occurs between November 1<sup>st</sup> and April 31<sup>st</sup> (during the cooler months of the year) in order to establish healthy root systems in new plant material. Applications will only be accepted September 1<sup>st</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup>. Please call 619-533-7485 to confirm that program is accepting applications.

Did you know that more than 50% of the water consumed by most households is used to maintain landscapes and lawns? You can help reduce your outdoor water use, keep your landscape more attractive and healthy--and save money on your water bill--by replacing your thirsty turf grass with a sustainable and water wise ornamental landscape. City of San Diego Public Utilities Water Department customers residing in a single- family home, duplex, townhome, or condominium that is served by an individual water meter can receive a rebate for turf replacement. A limited number of rebates are available through a State of California grant and will be distributed on a first come, first served basis until funding is exhausted. This program is subject to change without prior notification. Read below for program requirements and application process. Rebate check will be sent to the customer of record 6-8 weeks after application and the post-inspection site visit is successfully completed. If you have questions after reading these guidelines, please call 619-533-7485.



Applicant's water account must be in good standing and program requirements must be met to be eligible for rebates. Customer must agree to and sign the application agreement before rebate is administered. Changes related to rebate program must comply with all applicable laws, codes, policies, covenants, conditions, and restrictions. *Applicants must provide their social security number in order to receive a rebate. Except to the extent the information must be provided to the IRS, social security numbers provided as part of the application process will be kept confidential under terms of the Federal Privacy Act of 1974. Pursuant to requirements of the IRS, rebates that exceed \$600 will be reported to the IRS and rebate program participants receiving \$600 or more in rebates will receive an IRS Form 1099 unless exemptions apply. Please consult with your tax advisor regarding tax implications of your rebate.*

**Rebate Process:**

1. **Submit an application...** Call 619-570-1999 to request a rebate application packet. Plan your front yard project, and submit the rebate application.

2. **Have a water conservation survey and get approval to begin project...** A Water Conservation Program representative will contact you to schedule a survey, evaluate proposed project area, and give you a project start date, at which time your 120 day conversion period begins. Project must be completed and a post-site inspection must be requested by the end of that 120 day period. (If submitting a garden design for the higher rebate amount, please submit scaled plans to Water Conservation Program within 45 days of the start date. See below for requirements.)
3. **Complete the project and schedule a post-site inspection...** Once project is complete call 619-570-1999 to schedule a post-installation site visit. A Water Conservation representative will verify square footage and that program criteria are met. If project does not meet criteria, extra time will be allotted to bring project into alignment. At this visit please provide representative with original itemized sales receipts and any landscape professional invoices (if applicable) which must include store and/or company name, purchase date, date of services, itemized list of products purchased, description of services rendered.
4. **Receive a rebate...** Allow 6-8 weeks for arrival in the mail.

#### Program Requirements:

- Receive \$1.25/SF (up to 1,600 SF) after replacing an existing high water using front yard turf grass with water wise ornamental landscape (using plants that are considered to be moderate, low, or very low in water use requirements). No garden design plans are required at the \$1.25 rebate level.
- Or, receive \$1.50/SF after submitting an existing landscape sketch and scaled garden design and irrigation plan and replacing an existing high water using front yard turf grass with water wise plants (up to 1,333 SF, including a maximum rebate for design plan of \$333.) Do-it-yourself garden design plans are not eligible for rebate. A scaled design plan must be completed by a landscape designer, landscape architect, certified landscape irrigation auditor or landscape contractor, and must include:
  - Plant names (common and scientific) with plant symbols showing coverage at 75%-100% maturity
  - Mulch type and permeable hardscape details
  - Estimated Total Water Use (ETWU)
  - Maximum Applied Watering Allowance (MAWA) – Maximum 70% of ET
  - Irrigation plan with hydrozones and head or emitter placement and equipment list (if no irrigation is planned – show hydrozones only)
- Rebate amount cannot exceed total cost of the project, up to a maximum of \$2,000 per property.
- Minimum project conversion area is 400 SF (front yard lawns smaller than 400 SF are permissible if 100% of turf in front yard is replaced).



- Existing turf at project site must be living and an in-ground irrigation system must be operational at the time of the pre-site visit.
- Project must replace high water use turf with plants that have moderate, low, or very-low watering requirements as defined in the Water Use Classification of Landscape Species <http://www.water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/docs/wucols00.pdf> or other accepted reference of plant water use.
- Converted areas must be permeable to air and water (ie. gravel, loose flagstone, decomposed granite). Permeable weed barriers are required under pervious hardscapes.
- If project will be irrigated, conversion of existing overhead spray irrigation system to micro-irrigation or low application rate rotating nozzles is highly recommended. The newly converted area must be on a separate irrigation valve from remaining turf. System must be capped if improved area will not have irrigation.
- At maturity, plant density of the converted area must cover at least 50% of the project site.
- Mulch must be spread to minimum depth of three inches where new plant material is installed unless a spreading groundcover is indicated.
- Pre- and post-site inspections are required as well as submittal of original receipts, invoices, and total project costs. Projects must be completed within 120 days from the date Water Conservation Program representative approves start of project at pre-site inspection.
- Project site must be maintained for a minimum of five years, or for the duration of ownership of the property (whichever is shortest.) Failure to meet this requirement may require customer to refund all or a portion of the rebate.
- Planting must occur November 1<sup>st</sup> through April 31<sup>st</sup> only, during best season for healthy plant establishment. A variance to current water use restrictions will be included with the approved application, allowing a six month period of amended water use restrictions to allow for the healthy establishment of new plants. A specific watering schedule will be established for the project area as part of the variance and must be adhered to.
- Project site shall be available for future inspection and monitoring (up to five years) by Public Utilities. Photos of the project may be taken by Public Utilities staff to illustrate successful transitions from thirsty landscapes to attractive, water wise landscapes.



#### Non-qualifying Sustainable Landscape:

- Artificial turf or vegetable garden
- Back yard turf conversion
- Non-biodegradable weed blocking material
- Exposed soil surfaces (exceptions made to accommodate specific garden design motifs)
- Impermeable surfaces such as bricks and flagstone mortared into place, or concrete. (Pervious surfaces that are part of the project area are eligible for rebate so long as total project area includes living plant coverage area at maturity of at least 50%)
- Dead lawn prior to applying for rebate

- Planting of invasive species that have potential to spread aggressively, especially in areas interfacing wild lands, canyons, open space, or parks. For list of invasive species in southern California go to:  
<http://www.calipc.org/landscaping/dpp/planttypes.php?region=socal>  
<http://www.asla-sandiego.org/images/matrix.pdf>

### What is a sustainable landscape?

Sustainable landscapes are intended to be in balance with the local climate and environment and designed to require few added resources, thereby reducing waste and minimizing air, water, and soil pollution. The Sustainable Landscape-Turf Replacement Rebate Program is intended to encourage the replacement of high water using front yard turf with ornamental plant material that thrives with little to moderate amounts of



water during the extended dry periods that characterize San Diego's climate. The scaled use of turf, with a focus on the use of water wise plant material, abundant mulch, efficient irrigation and reduced runoff are components of sustainable landscaping. The objective of this rebate program is to encourage a reduction in water use through the conversion of grass to water wise plant material, while maintaining a high level of living landscape to benefit the environment.



### Benefits of converting turf to sustainable landscape (water wise ornamental shrubs and plants)?

Lawns (or turf) are often the optimal choice for sports and recreational areas, but lawns, especially those that consist of cool season grasses such as tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, red fescue, or perennial ryegrass, require frequent watering and maintenance. The Sustainable Landscape -turf Replacement Rebate Program focuses on the removal of thirsty turf grass material in your front yard, and replacement with ornamental water wise plants that use a low to moderate amount of water. Additional steps such as converting overhead sprinklers to low flow micro-irrigation and installing a Smart Controller can further reduce water and energy use.

### How much water does a sustainable landscape save?

A typical lawn (cool season grass) uses between 14 and 40 gallons of water per square foot annually, depending on the climate, replacement plant material, and irrigation efficiency. Once established, low to moderate water using plants require much less water than cool season turf grass.

Costs that are covered by the sustainable landscape rebate:



The rebate is \$1.25/SF of lawn area that is replaced with ornamental water wise landscape--up to a maximum of \$2,000 per customer. The rebate increases to \$1.50/SF if a landscape design professional is used to develop a scaled design plan showing details such as total water use requirements as a percentage of evapo-transpiration (ET) for the planned landscape, common and scientific plant names, plant coverage at maturity, and irrigation design (hydrozones).

