



City of San Diego
RESIDENTIAL OUTDOOR WATER CONSERVATION
REBATE PROGRAM

Sustainable Landscape-Turf
Replacement Rebate Guidelines
Rebate--\$1.25 / Square Foot up to \$3,000

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 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. Funding for a limited number of rebates is available through a State of California grant and will be distributed on a first come, first served basis until 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 post-installation site visit are successfully completed. If you have questions after reading these guidelines, please call 619-533-4126 or e-mail waterconservationrebates@sandiego.gov.

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 made related to rebate program must comply with all applicable laws, codes, policies, covenants, conditions, and restrictions. Please consult with a tax advisor if you have questions regarding any potential tax implications of your rebate.



Rebate Process

1. **Get an application...** Visit the City's [Water Conservation Website](#) to download the Residential Outdoor Rebate Program Application. Submit completed application to Water Conservation Program.
2. **Get a pre-site inspection and approval to begin project...** After the application is received a City scheduler will contact you to schedule a free water conservation survey and pre-site inspection. A Water Conservation Program representative will evaluate the proposed project area and if qualifications are met you will be given a project start date, at which time the 120 day conversion period begins.

3. **Submit plant list or design plans within 45 days of start date** Submit plant list within 45 days of project start date. See below for more information on plant list.
4. **Complete the project and schedule a post-installation visit within 120 days...** Call 619-570-1999 to schedule a post-installation site visit once project is completed (site visit must be scheduled before the 120 day conversion period is over). A Water Conservation representative will verify square footage and that program requirements are met. At this visit please provide representative with original itemized sales receipts which must include vendor and/or company name, purchase date, date of services, and itemized list of products purchased.
5. **Receive a rebate...** Once application is deemed complete and post-installation site visit is successfully completed please allow 6-8 weeks for the rebate check to arrive in the mail.

Program Requirements:

- Project must replace high water use turf with plants that have moderate, low, or very-low watering requirements as defined in the 2010 Edition UC Davis Arboretum All-Stars brochure, the [Water Use Classification of Landscape Species Reference \(WUCOLS\)](#) or other accepted reference of plant water use.
- At maturity, plant density of the converted area must cover at least 50% of the project area. Tree canopy coverage (existing and new trees) will not be counted in the 50% plant coverage calculation.
- Rebate amount cannot exceed total project cost, up to a maximum of \$3,000 per property.
- Minimum project conversion area is 400 SF (front yard lawns with less than 400 SF are eligible if 100% of turf is replaced).
- Existing turf in project area must be living and an in-ground irrigation system must be operational at the time of the survey/pre-site inspection.
- 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.
- 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 survey/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.
- 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 transitions from thirsty landscapes to attractive, water wise landscapes. Addresses to project sites participating in the rebate program will be available to the public. Customer names will not be made public or associated with the address.

REBATE LEVEL:

- Receive \$1.25/SF (up to 2,400 SF). A plant list must be submitted within 45 days of project start date. Plant list can be found in PDF format on the Sustainable Landscape-Turf Replacement webpage on the [Water Conservation website](#). Plant list must include plants that will be planted, number of plants, size at maturity and WUCOLS page reference (or other accepted reference of plant water use page reference).

What does not qualify for a rebate?

- Turf grass
- High water using plants (as classified by WUCOLS)
- Artificial turf
- Vegetable gardens
- Back yard turf conversion
- 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 of at least 50% at maturity)
- Water features or fountains (San Diego Municipal Code Land Development Code Appendix E calculates water features at same water coefficient as high water use plants)
- 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 go to the [California Invasive Plant Council website](#) or the [San Diego County Invasive Ornamental Plant Guide](#).



What is a sustainable landscape?

Sustainable landscapes are intended to be in balance with the local climate and environment, and are 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 turf grass 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 and water wise landscape.

Turf grass is often the optimal choice for sports and recreational areas, but turf - 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 replacement of thirsty turf grass material with ornamental water wise plants that use a moderate to very low 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 and help control irrigation runoff.

How much water does a sustainable landscape save?

Typically, cool season turf grass uses between 14 and 40 gallons of water per square foot annually, depending on site conditions. Once established, low to moderate water using plants can require less than half of the water required by cool season turf grass.

Costs that are covered by the sustainable landscape rebate.

The rebate is \$1.25/SF for lawn area that is replaced with ornamental water wise landscape. Maximum rebate is \$3,000 per customer. Labor costs are not eligible for rebate. Tax is not included. Total rebate amount will not exceed the cost of the material.

