Collaborative Water-Efficient Landscape GRANTS

Get funding for your landscape project, and become a partner in Northern Water’s education and outreach network

In 2018, Northern Water launched its Collaborative Water-Efficient Landscape Grant Program to promote water-efficient, Colorado climate-friendly landscapes and to broaden its education and outreach efforts.

The program helps fund new or redeveloped landscapes based on the principles and best practices displayed at the Northern Water Demonstration Gardens. Northern Water will also provide signs so that these projects can serve as water-efficient landscape education sites for the public.

The maximum amount that will be awarded per project is $20,000. A 50 percent match is required.

The value of in-kind labor can potentially be factored into the 50-percent match, but Northern Water will make that determination on a case-by-case basis. A limited number of grants will be awarded.

Who can apply?

The program is open to new or redeveloping landscapes at:
- Public facilities or open spaces
- Businesses
- Schools
- Multi-family complexes
- HOA-managed landscapes

Projects must be within Northern Water’s boundaries.

What projects qualify?

Landscapes must be:
- At least 1,000 square feet (smaller projects may be considered if they offer unique public education opportunities)
- Designed to use substantially less water than traditional landscapes
- Designed to include at least 50 percent plant coverage when plants are mature
Additional grant program details

- Potential applicants are required to take part in a consultation at the project site with Northern Water staff prior to submitting an application.
- This incentive program is not retroactive. Projects underway prior to approval are ineligible.
- Grant recipients must sign a contract agreement with Northern Water prior to starting the project.
- The applicant is responsible for attaining the required permits from local entities and making sure the project is in compliance with all local ordinances.
- Implementation of the project is also the sole responsibility of the applicant.
- Grant recipients will be required to submit monthly updates and photos while the project is underway.
- Grant payments will be made once the project is completed. Grant recipients and Northern Water must sign-off on a project-completion checklist prior to receiving funds.
- Hard costs (plants and materials) plus contract and in-kind labor (at Northern Water’s discretion) can qualify for matching funds. Material costs per unit must not exceed manufacturer’s suggested retail price. In-kind labor (if applicable) must be documented and is to be valued at prevailing rates not to exceed $25 per hour.
- Recipients must keep all original receipts to verify grant qualifications have been met. Copies of itemized receipts are required for reimbursement processing. Contractor invoices must show an itemized materials list separate from labor.
- To ensure water savings are achieved, the converted area must remain in compliance with the program terms and conditions for a period of five years following receipt of the grant payment. Applicants are required to include a maintenance plan as part of the application process.
- Incorporating third-party designations or certifications is encouraged. These would include programs such as Audubon of the Rockies’ Habitat Hero, National Wildlife Federation’s Certified Wildlife Habitat, and options from Audubon International and Xerces Society. Also consider becoming a Plant Select demonstration garden if applicable.
- It’s recommended to use certified contractors and designers for assistance. Professionals can be found through our “Landscape Renovation Resources” guide at northernwater.org, or WaterSense’s “Find a Pro” tool at watersense.org.

Additional landscape requirements

Location: High-visibility locations will be given priority due to the educational component of this program, but all qualifying projects will be considered.

Plants: Must have xeric to moderate water requirements and be appropriate to northern Colorado’s climate. Please refer to our plant list and other resources at northernwater.org. Invasive plants, artificial plants and turf are not allowed.

50 percent plant cover: To meet the 50 percent coverage requirement, up to half of the existing tree canopy can be used. This means 50 percent plant coverage at plant maturity in the landscape. Plants outside the converted area are not considered in the calculation, even if they’re adjacent to or overhang into the converted area.

Hardscape: Impermeable surfaces, such as concrete, that do not allow water to penetrate into the ground, are not allowed as part of the conversion area. Permeable concrete or pavers are allowed, but the 50 percent plant cover rule still applies to the entire area.

Mulch: Appropriate planting areas must have a minimum of three inches of wood or natural-material mulch. If a weed barrier is used below the mulch, it must be permeable to air and water.

Fabric: Not using fabric directly around plants and under wood and rock mulch smaller than one-half-inch is preferred.

Irrigation: An irrigation system is not required. However, if installed, the system must have a WaterSense-approved controller, be well-designed and receive an irrigation audit. Where possible, drip irrigation is preferred. As the project is implemented, separate metering of the irrigation system is preferred, if possible.

Contact Us

Additional details and updates will be available at www.northernwater.org/grants.
You can also contact Chad Kuhnel at 970-292-2566 or at ckuhnel@northernwater.org.

Submitting an application?

Please be sure to also include:
- Photos of the property
- Project design drawings
- A site map with dimensions
- Cost break-down, including total in-kind services and other funding
- A five-year maintenance plan for the landscape
- Project approval from the HOA community or business equivalent
- Any other information pertinent to the project