

**Cash for Grass Program
Frequently Asked Questions**

Application

Q1: Can I apply for the Cash for Grass program more than once?

A: Yes, but you may only participate in the cash for grass rebate program once per fiscal year.

Q2: Can I apply for more than one SCWA rebate program?

A: Yes, you may apply for other rebate programs offered while participating in the Cash for Grass rebate program. Please visit www.scwa.net to view the other water conservation rebate programs being offered.

Q3: How do I submit my Cash for Grass application?

A: You will need to print out the application, fill it out and mail it to:

Sacramento County Water Agency
10151 Florin Road
Sacramento, CA 95829
Attn: Cash for Grass Program

Q4: What do I have to submit with my application?

A: Your application should include:

1. Signed Application
2. Sketch of project conversion area along with measurements
3. Completed and signed Payee Data Record
4. Current photos showing the area where the lawn will be removed (digital submission)

If you need assistance with measuring your area of turf conversion, you may request an inspector to do so. The inspector will go out, measure, and let you know the square footage. If a backyard is being considered, the inspector will need to make special arrangements to conduct this measurement (See How to Measure Your Project Area).

A minimum of three (3) photos will need to be submitted digitally to SCWARebate@sacounty.gov. Be sure to include your address in the subject line and your name in the body of the email (See How to Take Your Project Photographs). Photos submitted must have been taken within the last 30 days. Digital photo metadata will be used to verify when the photo was taken. Submission of old photos will be declined.

**To make sure that our emails are not filtered into your "junk", "spam", or "bulk" folder, please add SacCounty.GOV to your list of trusted senders.*

Qualification Requirements

Q5: How can I find my Sacramento County Consolidated Utilities Account Number?

A: You can view your account number on your Sacramento County Consolidated Utilities billing Service (CUBS) bill, or call 875-5555 between the hours of 7:30am to 5:30 pm Monday through Friday to obtain your account number.

Q6: What if I am on private well water or irrigated my lawn with recycled water?

A: Customers who irrigate with recycled water or with a private well do not qualify for the SCWA Cash for Grass rebate program.

Q7: When can I start my project?

A: You may start your project after all components of your application have been approved. You will receive an Application Approval Notice via email.

Q8: I turned off the water on my grass and it has started to die. Can I still qualify for the program?

A: Yes, turf dying in response to the current drought conditions or preparing your yard for turf removal can still be eligible for funding. Bare earth areas are not eligible for rebates.

Q9: Can I receive a rebate now for work I have already completed if I have photos showing there was grass in the areas I converted?

A: No, you must have grass (dead or alive) when you apply for the rebate. Projects performed without County approval will not be eligible for rebate. The submission of applications for work that has already been completed with photographs of grass that has already been removed is considered a fraudulent use of the Cash for Grass Rebate Program.

Q10: What should I do with my small side yard?

A: When converting a front yard landscape, we highly encourage applicants to include the narrow side yard and mow strips in front of the fence as part of their conversion.

Q11: Can I apply to convert my backyard?

A: Yes, you can convert any lawn area. A minimum of 200 square feet of converted area is required to be eligible for the program.

Q12: Do commercial applicants need to coordinate with their jurisdictional Planning Department during the Cash for Grass process?

A: Commercial applicants will need to submit complete landscape re-design and irrigation plans that are consistent with the requirements of the Water Use and Conservation Ordinance and Zoning Code for landscaping to the local Planning Department for review and approval. Applicants will need to provide evidence of jurisdictional approval to Sacramento County Water Agency prior to beginning project.

Q13: What if my Homeowner's Association or CC&Rs requires me to keep grass in my yard?

A: To avoid problems, an applicant must make certain to follow all applicable laws, rules, appropriate HOA and CC&R policies that may apply to any anticipated landscaping project. Any turf remaining cannot be included as part of the rebate.

Project Completion

Q14: How long do I have to complete my lawn conversion?

A: Residential applicants will need to complete the landscape conversion within 120 days after application approval notice. Commercial applicants will have 120 days to complete their conversion after the Planning Department's approval. A one-time 30 day extension may be granted if requested by the applicant but you must contact SCWA for this extension prior to the end of the 120 day due date.

Q15: What do I do when I am finished with my lawn conversion?

A: After completing your project, you are ready to request your rebate. Email SCWA at SCWARebate@sacounty.gov to schedule your post-inspection visit. Please include your name, address and phone number in the email. You will turn in your completed Plant Coverage Worksheet at the time of inspection.

Q16: When will I get paid?

A: Rebates will be awarded on a "first come, first served" basis as projects are completed. Rebates may take approximately 8-10 weeks to process after a post-inspection visit and approval, but may take longer if documentation required for rebate is incomplete. The Sacramento County Water Agency reserves the rights to terminate this program at any time, for any reason.

Irrigation

Q17: Do I need an existing irrigation system to participate in the program?

A: No, you are not required to have an existing irrigation system to participate in the program.

Q18: Can I hand water my new plants?

A: Hand watering is acceptable. If watering with a hose, an automatic shutoff nozzle is required.



Q19: What do you mean by drip irrigation?

A: Drip irrigation is an irrigation method that saves water and fertilizer by allowing water to drip slowly to the roots of many different plants, either onto the soil surface or directly onto the root zone, through a network of valves, pipes, and tubing.

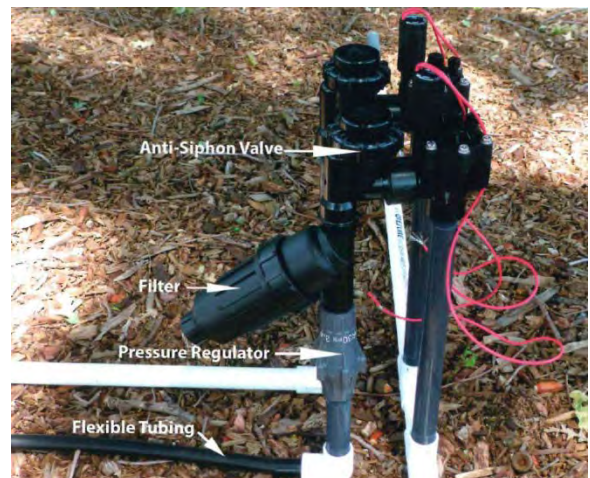


Q20: What are the drip irrigation requirements?

A: A low volume drip irrigation system must be equipped with a pressure regulator, filter and emitters. Each drip emitter must be rated at less than two and one-half (2.5) gallons per hour (gph). Installation and use of overhead spray systems (including micro spray), soaker hoses or emitters with an adjustable flow are not an authorized alternative and do not meet the terms of the program. If part of a lawn is converted, the sprinkler system must be properly modified to provide adequate coverage to the remaining lawn without spraying the converted area (narrow lawn areas often waste water and should be avoided). All newly installed equipment specified to minimize runoff and overspray.

Q21: Why do I need a filter and pressure regulator?

A: The emitters on a drip irrigation system have very small openings for the water to pass through. A filter prevents sediment from clogging emitters, ensuring that plants will get the correct amount of water. A pressure regulator keeps the irrigation system at the manufacturer's recommended pressure (usually between 20 and 40 pounds per square inch). Not installing a pressure regulator may cause fittings and lines to fail, creating wasteful breaks and leaks in your system.



Q22: What if I want to keep a part of my lawn?

A: An applicant does not have to eliminate all of their lawn area to participate. A minimum of 200 square feet must be removed to be eligible for program participation. Some conversion projects simply involve reducing the amount of lawn area or creating a buffer area around the edge of an existing lawn.

Plant Coverage and Specifications

Q23: Why does the SCWA require plants?

A: This program encourages the use of water efficient landscaping, and the County wants that landscaping to be attractive in order to encourage others to do the same. Trees, shrubs and groundcovers provide shade, absorb carbon dioxide, supply oxygen, reduce soil erosion, give wildlife a home, decrease energy use, reduce storm water runoff, and saves water.

Q24: How do I determine if I've met the minimum plant coverage requirement of fifty percent (50%)?

A: SCWA provides a plant coverage worksheet on our website to help applicants confirm that they have met the fifty percent (50%) coverage requirement. Please see the Plant Coverage Worksheet for instructions on how to complete the worksheet. A completed worksheet is due at the time of the post-inspection visit.

Q25: What plants can I use in my water-efficient landscape?

A: The Cash for Grass Rebate Program does not require particular plants, only that when fully mature, the plants cover at least fifty percent (50%) of the converted area. An applicant can use any non-invasive, low and/or medium water use plants to meet this requirement, but Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA) highly encourages the use of drought tolerant and native species. The recommended plant list provides excellent landscaping options. An applicant should also consider keeping any existing trees because they provide shade to one's home and landscape.

The recommend list of most commonly used low and/or medium water use plants in the Sacramento Valley region can be found on the Cash for Grass program website by following the [Recommended Plant Lists](#) link. This list provides both the plant's common name and its botanical name. The list includes the mature size of each plant in square feet to help ensure that applicants meet the fifty percent (50%) coverage requirement. If an applicant chooses plants that are not included on the plant list, the applicant must provide SCWA with the water use and coverage requirements of the chosen plants. High water use plants, trees, grass and invasive species are excluded from the program.

Note: Potted plants do not count towards the 50% plant coverage requirement.

Q26: Can I receive credit for replacing my high water use grass with a low water use grass?

A: No. Any grass (except ornamental grasses) will be excluded from the rebate area. This program provides incentive to convert grass to alternative types of landscaping, including trees, shrubs, succulents, and groundcovers. These use less water than even the lowest water use grass.

Q27: Are vegetable gardens allowed?

A: No, vegetable gardens are excluded from the Cash for Grass Program.

Q28: I have an established tree located within the conversion area. Will the tree count toward the 50 percent (50%) coverage requirement?

A: If an established tree is located within the converted area, the applicant can use one-half (1/2) of the total mature tree canopy towards the living fifty percent (50%) plant coverage requirement.

Q29: I have many plants surrounding the area where I am removing the grass (conversion area). Will these plants count toward the 50 percent (50%) coverage requirement?

A: No. The 50 percent (50%) plant coverage requirement must be achieved within the conversion area. For example, if 300 square feet of grass is removed, a minimum of 150 square feet of plant coverage must be demonstrated within the conversion area on the plant coverage worksheet.

Q30: Do plants have to cover 50 percent (50%) of the conversion area when you come and inspect my landscape?

A: An applicant can choose plants at any size and stage of growth. Planting smaller plants (1 gallon) are less expensive and have a tendency to adapt better to their new environment. The calculations you will submit are for the mature plant size and should be used on the Plant Coverage Worksheet to reach the 50 percent requirement, not the actual size of the plants when inspected.

Q31: What is mulch and why is it required?

A: Mulch is required on all exposed soil surfaces. The most common types of mulch are decorative rock or bark. Mulch helps maintain the moisture level. Wood mulches help retain the temperature of the soil. Without mulch, wind and heat pull the moisture out of the soil and more water is then needed to keep plants healthy. Also, the temperature of the soil constantly fluctuates causing plants a lot of stress. Additional benefits include the reduction of weed growth, erosion and certain insect diseases.

A minimum of 3" layer of mulch is required. Compost will be allowed as mulch as long as it is covered or contained by rocks or wood chips in order to prevent erosion or migration from rain and wind.



Newspaper, cardboard and non-organic materials will not be allowed as mulch. Stabilizing surface treatments should be used on slopes or base of slope to prevent runoff.

Q32: Do I have to use a weed barrier?

A: No. Weed barriers are generally recommended in areas that have a particular weed problem (i.e. areas where Bermuda grass is being removed or under permeable surfaces such as patios and walkways where plants will not be grown). If a weed barrier is used, SCWA requires that it be permeable allowing both water and air to penetrate.

Q33: Can I receive credit for putting in a patio, a walkway or an extension to my driveway?

A: Yes. If the applicant will be removing turf to install a patio, a walkway or a driveway extension, SCWA will allow credit if a permeable product is used. Permeable products include pervious, permeable and/or porous pavers or pervious concrete, or surfaces with decomposed granite or cobble. All of these options reduce the amount of water runoff by allowing water to pass through the surface and be absorbed into the soil beneath. Keep in mind that the conversion area must still meet the fifty percent (50%) living plant coverage requirement. Stabilizing surface treatments should be used on slopes or base of slope to prevent runoff.

Q34: Can I receive credit for replacing my lawn with artificial turf?

A: The County can accept artificial turf. Any artificial turf must be installed by a licensed contractor and be permeable (allowing both air and water to pass through freely). Installation must meet all other program terms and conditions and in compliance with County and/or City codes and ordinances.

If artificial turf is to be used in any part of the conversion, the artificial turf must be installed by a licensed contractor and in compliance with local codes. The contractor must properly prepare the landscaped area for installation according to the manufacturer's specifications. Turf must be securely fastened to the ground and seams shall be glued and stapled to minimize tears. Products installed must be permeable to water and air and must be non-flammable. If you are considering artificial turf, products that provide a natural look or appearance are recommended. Patio cover and/or AstroTurf are ineligible. Product installed must have a minimum ten (10) year manufacturer warranty. Artificial turf must not encroach upon living plants/trees and must end at least 3 inches from the base of any plant/tree. The current irrigation system in the converted area must be capped at the valve and no longer used.

Note: The 50% plant coverage requirement still applies. Check with your local jurisdiction's zoning codes to confirm that artificial turf is allowed for turf replacements and for other requirements related to using artificial turf in a landscaped area.

Q35: Do I get credit for removing my high water use plants?

A: No. The Cash for Grass program focuses solely on the removal of turf grass.

Q36: Where can I find resources for design ideas, irrigation, and other landscape-related information?

A: Visit the links provided below for resources and great ideas for converting high water use landscapes to water conserving landscapes:

California Native Plant Society:

http://www.cnps.org/cnps/grownative/tips/lawn_alternatives.php

UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden - Drought Resources:

<http://publicgarden.ucdavis.edu/public-garden/drought-resources>

Sunset Magazine resources:

<http://www.sunset.com/garden/earth-friendly/lose-the-lawn-low-water-landscaping/view-all>

<http://www.sunset.com/garden/landscaping-design/landscaping-ideas-with-stone/view-all>

Regional Water Authority sites:

<http://rwah2o.org/programs/wep/>

<http://bewatersmart.info/find-your-water-provider/>

<http://www.rwa.watersavingplants.com/>

UCCE Master Gardeners of Sacramento County

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/sacmg/>