



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CASH FOR GRASS LAWN REPLACEMENT REBATE

What is the process to apply for the Cash for Grass rebate?

1. Immediately suspend irrigation to the project area.
2. Submit an application to obtain pre-approval before commencing the project.
3. Marin Water staff will contact you to arrange a pre-installation site visit.
4. Complete your project within 45-days.
5. Contact Marin Water staff to arrange a post-installation site visit.
6. Obtain approval and complete required paperwork.
7. Receive your rebate check in the mail.

How much is the Cash for Grass rebate?

The rebate is currently \$3.00 per square foot of lawn replaced (covered) with [sheet mulching](#) materials. The maximum rebate amount is \$5,000 for residential sites, \$20,000 for commercial sites. Rebates will be issued in the form of a check.

Who is eligible to participate?

The Program is available to residential and non-residential Marin Water customers with potable water accounts. The program is not for areas irrigated with recycled water

Can I apply for both Cash for Grass and Mulch Madness?

No. Eligible customers may only participate in either the Cash for Grass rebate or the Mulch Madness program.

How many times can I apply for the rebate?

Eligible customers may participate one time per water account.

How long will it take to get a pre-installation appointment?

It typically takes 1-4 weeks for staff to provide the pre-installation appointment. We appreciate your patience during this very busy time.

What lawn areas are eligible for the Program?

- The purpose of the program is to achieve a long-term reduction in irrigation water use by removing lawn areas from the landscape (lawn is generally the highest water use plant in any landscape).
- To be eligible, project areas must clearly be planted in grass.
- Areas of dormant or recently dead turf grass qualify.
- Bare dirt areas or other areas where evidence of recent grass cannot be verified will not be eligible.
- Evidence of recent grass includes analysis of recent customer water use records.
- There is no minimum area of grass required to be replaced.

Does my current lawn area need to be watered by an automatic irrigation system to qualify?

No. An existing automatic irrigation system is not required in the area to be converted. An existing sprinkler irrigation system in the project area must be removed or have the spray heads capped in place.

If only part of a lawn area is removed and the irrigation system is left in place for future use when converted to low water use plants, the converted area must be irrigated on a separate valve from the remaining lawn. The sprinkler system for the remaining lawn must be modified to only irrigate the remaining lawn area and may not spray onto the converted area.

Can I receive a rebate for replacing my high-water-use lawn with low-water-use lawn?

No. This is a drought emergency Program that provides an incentive to remove lawns and to immediately suspend irrigation. It would be impossible to establish a new lawn or any other plantings without irrigating.

Can I receive a rebate for replacing high water use plants other than lawn?

No. The Program only credits lawn that is removed.

Can I receive a rebate for replacing my lawn with artificial turf?

No. Artificial turf is not eligible for a rebate. Marin Water has made this decision for the following reasons:

1. Artificial turf does not last forever and ultimately has to be disposed of in a landfill.
2. Artificial turf does not provide habitat for any living species.
3. Artificial turf contributes to the heat island effect which raises the temperature of urban environments.
4. Concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of artificial turf on underlying soil and groundwater.

Can I receive a rebate for replacing my lawn with a concrete patio, a walkway or an extension to my driveway?

No. The program does not allow non-permeable hardscape. However, permeable hardscape, such as gravel, brick or flagstone with permeable, mortar-less materials for grout lines (such as sand and gravel) is allowed. The use of inorganic landscape fabric or plastic sheeting will make the area ineligible for the rebate.

I replaced my lawn last month/year. Can I get a rebate?

No. The program is not retroactive and cannot provide rebates for projects that were started prior to receiving approval from Marin Water. The Program is intended to provide an incentive to retrofit existing lawns.

How do I get rid of my existing lawn?

Existing lawns must be covered with sheet mulching materials – cardboard, compost and organic mulch – or other approved permeable materials. Over time, the sheet mulching materials will kill the covered grass, which will decompose and help improve the soil underneath. Using plastic sheeting, inorganic landscape fabric, or any methods other than sheet mulching will make the project area ineligible for the rebate.

What is sheet mulching?

Sheet mulching is a method of replacing existing grass by using layers of organic materials:

1. Cardboard acts as a weed barrier. Use 1-2 layers, overlap by 8-inches.
2. Compost improves soil texture and soil moisture holding capacity. Use a 2-inch layer.
3. Mulch reduces evaporation, moderates soil temperature, and acts as a weed barrier. Use a 3-inch layer.

For more information visit <http://lawntogarden.org/>.

What is mulch and what type is required?

Generally speaking, mulch is any material that covers and protects the soil surface and allows air and water through. **Organic mulches** (derived from plant material) add nutrients over time and enrich overall soil composition. The Program requires that converted areas have a minimum of three inches (3") of organic mulch.

[FireSAFE Marin](#) recommend composted wood chips and strongly discourages the use of shredded redwood or cedar bark (sometimes called "gorilla hair").

Inorganic materials, such as gravel, rock, or decomposed granite, are also used as mulch and are allowed. They are not recommended as they contribute to the heat island effect in urban environments, and may not be as effective at killing grass as sheet mulching.

What type of weed barrier is required?

Cardboard is recommended as it is widely available and has been shown to be effective. Paper can also be used, but will require more layers to be as effective. In all cases, overlap by 6-8 inches to block out light. The use of inorganic landscape fabric or plastic sheeting will make the area ineligible for the rebate.

What does a sheet mulched area look like?

Before



After



I have a sloped site, can I sheet mulch?

Sheet mulching involves putting approximately 5-inches of material on top of the project area. This is ideally suited to flat or moderately sloped sites. Sites with steeper slopes may need to modify the approach to ensure that all of the material stays in place over time.

Can I replant with low water use plants immediately?

Current [water use restrictions](#) do not allow for sufficient irrigation of new plants and participants are strongly advised to defer planting until after drought restrictions are lifted. Allowing the sheet mulched area to become properly saturated with rain will also help to ensure that the old lawn is properly decomposed, providing healthy living soil for replanting in the future.

Is a sheet mulched area suitable for planting into in the future?

Sheet mulching promotes healthy living soil and provides ideal conditions for plants to thrive once it has had some time for the grass to decompose. Most plants can be planted into a sheet mulched area without any issues.

- Trees, shrubs, and perennials can be transplanted directly from containers into sheet mulched areas. . Most plants can be purchased in 4-inch or 1-gallons containers. Smaller plants are often better because they are cheaper and establish more quickly and end up growing better than plants that have been in containers longer. 4-inch plants can be planted into the compost layer by just pulling aside the mulch. 1-gallon containers and larger will need to be planted by digging a hole through the cardboard and into the soil.
- Ground covers purchased in plugs or as rolls of sod are not a good fit for a sheet mulched area. These should be installed on prepared soil.
- Always ensure that mulch is kept several inches away from plant stems to avoid potential plant health issues.