



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. Complete and submit an application form before starting your project.
3. Marin Water staff will contact you to arrange a pre-inspection site visit, including an indoor and outdoor Conservation Assistance Program (CAP) site survey.
4. During the pre-inspection site visit, work with Marin Water staff to review the project area and understand the program requirements.
5. Once your project is approved, complete your project within 180-days. Visit the [WaterSmart Gardening Resource Center](#) for low water use plant lists, design inspiration, and more.
6. Email rebates@marinwater.org or call (415) 945-1527 to arrange a post-inspection site visit.
7. Sign the completed application form during the post-inspection site visit.
8. For rebates of \$600 or more submit a completed [IRS Form W9](#).
9. Receive your rebate check in the mail.

How much is the Cash for Grass rebate?

Marin Water is offering residential and commercial customers with a potable water service a rebate in return for reducing the amount of lawn area in their landscapes. Two rebate tiers are available, a **standard rebate** of \$1.50/SQ FT for qualifying projects, and a **best practices rebate** of \$3.00/SQ FT for projects that follow best practices in sustainable landscaping. Both rebates are subject to a maximum area of 1,000 SQ FT for residential sites and 5,000 SQ FT 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 or well water.

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.

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 since 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?

The **best practices rebate** requires that the area be sheet mulched in place which will not provide a suitable planting area for a lawn. The **standard rebate** allows for lawn removal so that the area can be prepared for a new lawn but requires that any plants used are low water use and any irrigation is drip.

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?

For the **best practices** rebate existing lawns must be covered with sheet mulching materials – cardboard, compost and organic mulch. 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.

For the **standard rebate** other removal methods such as sod cutting may be used.

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.

Is a sheet mulched area suitable for planting into?

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-gallon 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.

How do I disable my sprinkler system?

Simply turning off the sprinkler system is not enough. The best solution is to cut the pipe either side of the irrigation valve(s) and glue a cap on both sides. If installing drip irrigation a new valve(s) with a filter and pressure regulator can be installed.

How do I know if plants are low water use?

The [Water Use Classification of Landscape Species](#) (WUCOLS) classifies several thousand plants by water use. Marin is in region 1. Plants classified as **low** or **very low** are eligible.

How do I know the mature size of plants?

The retail nursery where you purchase the plants or your landscape design professional should be able to provide this information.

What is an alternative water source?

An alternative water source is a source of water other than the potable supplied by Marin Water. These water sources can be directed into the landscape to reduce the amount of potable water needed for irrigation. Examples include rain gardens, rainwater harvesting cisterns, and graywater systems.

What is a rain garden?

Rain gardens are depressions in the ground designed to allow water to temporarily pool whilst it sinks into the soil. Water from downspouts is directed into the rain garden instead of out to the storm drain.



What is a rainwater harvesting cistern?

A rainwater harvesting cistern is a container for collecting and storing rainwater from roof surfaces so that it can be used to irrigate landscape plants. Just one inch of rain on a 1,000 square-foot roof produces 600 gallons of runoff. For more information visit the Rain Barrel and Cistern Rebate Program at <https://www.marinwater.org/rebates>.



What is a graywater system?

A graywater system is used to divert graywater from inside the home into the landscape to irrigate plants. Graywater is water from bathtubs, showers, bathroom sinks, washing machines, and laundry tubs. Graywater does not include waste water from toilets, urinals, kitchen sinks, dishwashers, photo lab sinks, or water from soiled diapers. For more information visit the [County of Marin website](https://www.marinwater.org/rebates) and <https://www.marinwater.org/rebates>.

Laundry to Landscape: Graywater System Example

