

Residential Turf Replacement Program Guide

Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC)

Before

Project by City of Huntington Beach Customer

After



Welcome

to the Turf Replacement Rebate Program!



Did you know? The Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) offers rebates on watersaving upgrades or retrofits to help you save water, time, and money! Through our Turf Replacement Rebate Program, you can successfully convert your grass into a sustainable, California Friendly® landscape. In addition to saving water, waterwise landscapes provide many environmental benefits such as reducing runoff, creating habitat for pollinators, promoting soil health, and increasing biodiversity. Your commitment helps to ensure that using water wisely is a way of life in Orange County!

Who We Are

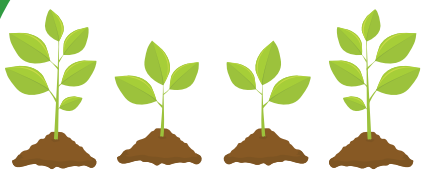
MWDOC provides clean, reliable water to 2.4 million people in Orange County through partnerships with 27 local water agencies. We work together to keep water safe and dependable by planning for the future, offering water-saving programs and rebates, supporting smart water policies, and preparing for emergencies. Through shared services like community outreach, education, and programs that help people use water wisely, we support all 3.1 million residents across the county.

Orange County's Water Supply

Around half of Orange County's water comes from Northern California and the Colorado River. The rest comes from local supplies, including a large underground aquifer in northern Orange County, recycled wastewater, and smaller groundwater basins.

Did you know? About 60% of the water used in Orange County homes goes toward watering yards. Switching from grass to a drought-tolerant landscape is an easy way to use less water and save on your water bill. By saving water today, we can ensure enough for the future.

CA Native Plants



Use 60-80% less
water than grass

The Benefits of Turf Replacement

- 💧 **Lower your water bill** – Use less, pay less.
- 💧 **Water savings** – Reduce your outdoor water use.
- 💧 **Eco-friendly** – Orange County friendly plants support biodiversity.
- 💧 **Climate-adapted** – Drought-tolerant plants are well suited to Orange County weather.
- 💧 **Less maintenance** – Less mowing, fertilizing, and upkeep.

Understanding the Design Requirements

To be eligible for the Turf Replacement Rebate Program, all projects must be designed with the following elements:

- ✓ A sustainability feature for stormwater retention
- ✓ At least three (3) non-invasive plants per 100 square feet of project area
- ✓ Mulch covering bare soil
- ✓ A high-efficiency irrigation system
- ✓ A permeable (absorbent) design for air and water to soak into soil

Sustainability Features

Every project must include at least ONE of the following sustainability features. The sustainability feature captures rainwater, helping it soak into the garden soil instead of running off onto sidewalks and streets. It must be properly sized to effectively minimize runoff during a typical storm.



Rain Garden

A rain garden is a shallow, sloped area designed to absorb rainwater runoff from roofs, driveways, and walkways. Plants are distributed throughout the rain garden. Rainwater collects in the pooling areas and slowly soaks into the soil. Adding a rain garden can reduce erosion, pollution, and flooding.



Rain Barrel

Rebate available!

A rain barrel collects rainwater from the rooftop using gutters and downspouts to channel the rain. Rain barrels must hold at least 50 gallons, be properly installed, supply water to the project area, and meet local requirements. Existing rain barrels can qualify if they meet these standards, but homemade or DIY rain barrels and cisterns do not qualify.

Calculate the ideal size of a sustainability feature based on your project area:



mwdoc.dropletportal.com/rebate/program/resources



Additional Rain Barrel Rebate Available
Rebates start at \$35 | mwdoc.com/rainbarrels



Sustainability Features (cont.)



Eligible Tree

Rebate available!

Trees reduce stormwater runoff by intercepting rainwater through their canopy and trunk. Tree roots also help to take up water and improve soil absorption. Only certain trees qualify as a sustainability feature. For a list of eligible trees, visit: ocwatersmartgardens.com



Dry Riverbed

A dry riverbed slows heavy rainwater flow and redirects it to areas where it can soak into the ground. It is made with a shallow channel lined with stones. The sides should slope enough to make the depth visible. Plants that can tolerate periodic flooding during rain events can be planted along the sides.



Vegetated Swale

A vegetated swale is a shallow ditch with gently sloping sides. Plants are installed along the bottom and sides to slow runoff, filter sediments, and remove excess nutrients. It relies on gravity to move water and directs it to desired areas, such as flower or vegetable gardens. For proper drainage, one end should be slightly higher than the other.



Rock Garden

A rock garden is a planted, shallow depression filled with 1-3 inch diameter gravel. The sides should slope enough to make the depth noticeable. Rainwater collects in the space between the stones and eventually soaks into the soil. Plants suited to drier conditions thrive in rock gardens.



Berm

Berms are mounds of dirt with sloping sides between areas of approximately the same height. Berms help guide water to places where it can soak into the ground and prevent water from flowing off the property. Berms must be firmly packed down and topped off with mulch to prevent erosion. Plants can be installed throughout the berm.

Tree Resources Available

www.mwdoc.com/tree-resources



Plants and Materials



To be eligible for the Turf Replacement Rebate, all projects must be designed with at least three (3) plants per 100 square feet of project area. Visit ocwatersmartgardens.com to find Orange County friendly plants and real garden makeovers! Browse plant lists for lawn alternatives, low-maintenance trees, and water-wise perennials. Plants must be installed in the ground, not pots, to promote strong roots, healthy soil, and erosion control.



California Native Plants

Native plants thrive in the local climate and need less watering, fertilizing, and pest control. Find the right California native plants with [Calscape.org](https://calscape.org).



Edible Gardens

Fruit and vegetable plants count toward the plant requirement. You can add planter beds, but they must have a permeable bottom to allow water infiltration.

Mulch

Mulch helps retain moisture, regulate temperature, and prevent weeds while enriching the soil as it decomposes. Apply at least 3 inches of mulch to open spaces and around plants, leaving a 3–6 inch gap from stems or trunks to prevent rot. If you live in a CalFire Very High Fire Severity Zone, use inorganic mulch, such as rock or decomposed granite instead. <https://tinyurl.com/OCFAFireZones>



Trees

Rebate available!

Trees offer many benefits, including reducing runoff, cooling the environment, improving air and soil health, and supporting wildlife. To be eligible for an additional rebate, trees must be at least 15 gallons in size and planted within the designated turf replacement area.

Additional Rebate Available for Select Trees

\$100 per tree, up to 5 trees | mwdoc.dropletportal.com/rebate/turf/trees



Efficient Irrigation

To qualify for the Turf Replacement Rebate Program, you must either modify or remove any existing overhead spray sprinkler systems. If you plan to keep your existing irrigation system, it must be high-efficiency. **The following irrigation options are eligible:**

Drip Irrigation

Rebate available!

Drip irrigation sends water straight to plant roots through tubing, reducing evaporation, runoff, and waste. To keep it working well, add a pressure regulator and filter to your irrigation valve. When used with turf replacement, it lowers outdoor water use by an average of 40%.

Rebate starting at \$0.50 per sq. ft. mwdoc.com/SpraytoDrip



High-Efficiency Sprinklers

Rebate available!

Improve your irrigation system by switching to high-efficiency rotating nozzles. These nozzles spray water in slow and steady streams, use less water than regular sprinklers, and irrigate your yard evenly.

Rebate starting at \$2 per nozzle (minimum 15 nozzles)
mwdoc.com/nozzles



Hand Watering

Hand watering is an efficient way to care for your garden. If you plan to hand water, properly cap or remove all existing sprinkler heads and disconnect the entire spray zone from the water at the valve to prevent leaks. Use a hose with a shutoff nozzle to reduce water waste.

Smart Irrigation Timer

Rebate available!

While not required, we recommend upgrading your irrigation controller to a smart timer. A smart timer can cut overwatering while keeping your plants healthy. It automatically adjusts the watering schedule using information about your plants, soil, and the weather so your landscape gets the right amount of water all year long. Plus, rebates are available for eligible smart timers: up to \$180 per timer | mwdoc.com/timer



Program Exclusions

The following items are not permitted in the Turf Replacement Rebate Program and may disqualify your project from the rebate:



Artificial Turf

Artificial turf does not meet the program's goals of providing stormwater retention, creating habitat for pollinators, promoting soil health, and increasing biodiversity. It can also contain chemicals that harm the environment and is therefore not accepted in this program.



Other Grasses Resembling Turf

Although grass is not allowed, native grasses, such as purple needlegrass and ornamental bunch grasses, are allowed as long as they are not mowed.



Impermeable Hardscapes (concrete or grouted pavers)

Impermeable surfaces such as concrete and asphalt do not allow water to pass through, resulting in runoff. Runoff can collect harmful pollutants as it flows into storm drains, nearby waterways, and the ocean. Pavers, flagstone, and similar material must not exceed 3 feet by 3 feet and must be spaced out 2 inches or more on all sides to keep the landscape permeable. Examples of permeable filling for these materials are decomposed granite, gravel, and loose sand.



Invasive Plants

Invasive plants spread easily and compete with native plant species for resources. For a full list of invasive plants, visit: www.cal-ipc.org/plants/profiles

For a full list of terms and conditions visit:



mwdoc.dropletportal.com/rebate/turf/terms

Example of eligible pavers installed.

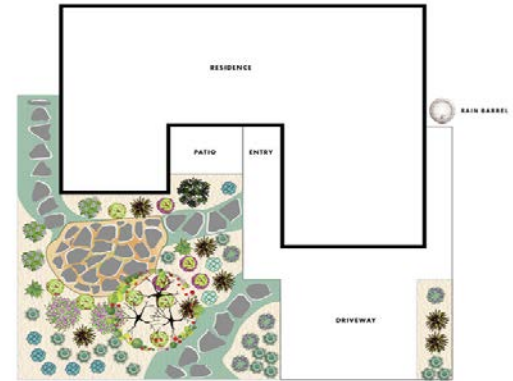
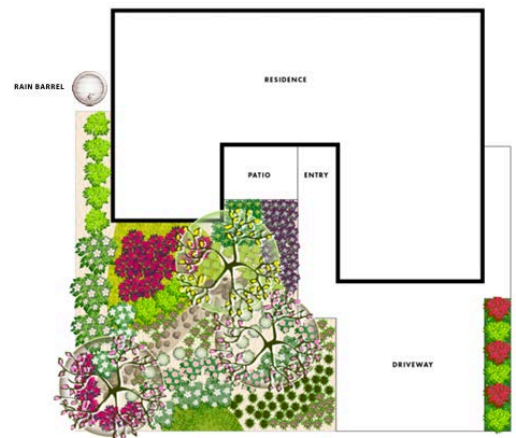


Site Plan

Creating Your Own Design

A site plan is required as part of the application process. It can be a simple drawing or sketch of your project plan showing your landscape changes. Outline the shape of your yard, include immovable features (e.g., house, driveway), mark grass areas, and label new plants and sustainability features. Include information on how you will irrigate the new landscape.

If you know the plants you want to install, list their scientific or common names in your plan. Create hydrozones by grouping plants with similar water, soil, sun, and temperature needs for efficient irrigation.



FREE Landscape Designs



MWDOC has also collaborated with top landscape designers to create FREE landscape designs for your use. The designs provided include examples of landscapes that thrive in Orange County's Mediterranean climate. Visit mwdoc.com/oc-friendly-landscapes to view the designs.

Landscape Design Rebate

Rebate available!



The Turf Replacement Rebate Program is offering an additional rebate for residential participants seeking professional design services! No additional application is required. Participants will receive a \$1,000 rebate (or the actual cost of the design, whichever is less) upon completion of their Turf Replacement project. Visit mwdoc.dropletportal.com/rebate/turf/ldr for more information.

Attend a FREE Workshop



Attend free, online landscaping workshops to help you create your design! Visit bewaterwise.com/classes.html for available classes.



Example Site Plan
mwdoc.com/TurfRemovalSitePlan

Maintaining Your New Landscape



- ✓ **Check your irrigation system monthly for any breaks or leaks.**
 - Turn on your system manually to conduct a leak check. Keep your irrigation system in good condition to ensure plants get enough water without wasting.

- ✓ **Adjust watering times seasonally or monthly.**
 - Plants require less water during the rainy season and may need supplemental watering during the summer. Use tools like a watering calculator or a weather-based irrigation timer for greater savings:

www.ocwatersmartgardens.com/calc

- ✓ **Replenish mulch annually.**
 - Maintaining a layer of mulch helps suppress weeds, regulate soil temperatures, improve soil health, reduce water loss, and prevent soil erosion.

- ✓ **Prune, thin, shear, and trim plants as needed.**
 - Remove dying branches, spent flowers, and any overgrown portions of your plants. Regular pruning helps promote healthy growth, improves air circulation, and maintains the plant's shape.

- ✓ **Remove weeds.**
 - It is normal for grass or other weeds to resprout. You can stay on top of preventing weed regrowth by regularly removing any weeds you see. Weeds compete with plants for nutrients, sunlight, and water, which can impact your garden's health.



For a water calculator and additional gardening resources: www.ocwatersmartgardens.com

Process Overview

01

APPLY ONLINE

MWDOC reviews your application and schedules it for pre-inspection.



PRE-INSPECTION

02

MWDOC reviews your pre-inspection results and emails a Letter to Proceed.

03

SIGN YOUR LETTER

Sign your Letter to Proceed with your project's pre-approved square footage.



GET STARTED

04

You have 90 days from the date of your Letter to Proceed to complete your project.

05

SUBMIT YOUR PROJECT

MWDOC reviews your completed project photos, receipts, and invoices and assigns your project to a final inspection.



POST-INSPECTION

06

MWDOC reviews your post-inspection results, approves your final project, and pays your rebate!

Project by Santa Margarita Water District Customer



37.6K Gallons
Saved
Annually

≈791 square feet converted
≈\$1,582 rebate received!

Steps to Complete the Rebate Process

01

APPLY ONLINE

- Create a Droplet Portal account** using the link below.
- Take six (6) color photos of the areas where you plan to remove grass.** *Do not remove your turf prior to receiving your Letter to Proceed!
- Provide a photo or scanned copy of your recent water bill.**
- Review the design requirements.** The program has specific features to include when designing your project.
- Submit a Site Plan.** Make a simple sketch of your project to show what changes you will make to transform your landscape. If you hire a professional landscape designer, an additional rebate is available.
- Review HOA and city landscaping requirements,** if applicable. Applicants are responsible for obtaining any design and/or construction approval from their HOA or city.



Droplet Portal

mwdoc.dropletportal.com/rebate/start



02

PRE-INSPECTION

- Wait for your pre-inspection appointment.** A program inspector will contact you for a pre-inspection. The inspector will measure eligible areas of grass and subtract out any non-turf areas.



03

SIGN YOUR LETTER

- Sign your Letter to Proceed.** After pre-inspection approval, you'll receive a letter via email from MWDOC with the approved square footage for your project. Pre-approval is only an estimate. The final rebate, confirmed after post-inspection, will not exceed the pre-inspection amount.



04

GET STARTED

- Complete your project within 90 days.** Be sure to completely remove your grass in the project area and dispose of all grass material.



Steps to Complete the Rebate Process (cont.)

05

SUBMIT YOUR PROJECT

- Submit at least five (5) color photos of the completed project area to your Droplet Portal Account.** Pictures must show the converted irrigation system, sustainability feature, and plants installed.
- Upload your receipts and invoices to your Droplet Account.** Only items eligible for reimbursement will be counted toward your final rebate amount.



06

POST-INSPECTION & REBATE!

- Wait for your post-inspection appointment.** A program inspector will contact you to schedule a post-inspection. The inspector will measure eligible project areas and subtract out any ineligible areas, such as non-permeable hardscape.
- Complete a Form W-9.** A signed IRS Form W-9 will be required for rebates of \$600 or more. The payee's name and address on your application must match the name on your Form W-9.
- Submit your Form W-9 to rebates@mwdoc.com.**
For the rebate to be issued, all program terms, instructions, and guidelines must be met.
- Receive your rebate.** Once your final project is approved, you will receive your rebate check in the mail!



Project by City of Orange Customer



**44.7K Gallons
Saved
Annually**

*≈941 square feet converted
≈\$2,508 rebate received!*



Contact us:



(714) 593-5036



TurfRemoval@mwdoc.com



www.mwdoc.com/turfremoval