

LADWP Turf Removal Program Morphs into Landscape Transformation Program

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Landscape Transformation Program



LADWP Landscape Transformation Program

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the Metropolitan Water District is trying to transform the way we think about landscaping our front and back yards. The two agencies want residents to think about long-term sustainability of our yards beyond just removing grass and trying to cut back on irrigation and that is reflected in the new name of the turf rebate program now called the Landscape Transformation Program.

“We want to make this a way of the life. We still see ourselves in drought conditions so we want to live water-wisely and water-consciously,” explained Henry Bersales, Senior Utility Service Specialist in the water conservation group at LADWP that creates water conservation programs for the public.

The LADWP buys the city’s water from the Metropolitan Water District (MWP) which serves 26 city agencies like LADWP around the region. MWP member agencies like the LADWP have numerous programs offering incentives to get residents to reduce water consumption. Since 50% of the average household’s water is used outdoor, trading cash for grass, was a obvious target to reduce water usage.

The program was wildly successful, so much so, it ran out of funds. Since the inception of the program in 2009, Bersales told the Buzz, LADWP has rebated 50 million square



Actually LADWP never ran out of money. It was some of the other MWD districts who ran out of funds. But MWD and its members decided to re-examine the objectives of the program and are now bringing the program back under a new name with improved guidelines to further the goal of long-term sustainability.

Under the new program, the rebate is \$2 per square foot with a minimum of 250 square feet and a maximum of \$1,500.

“At one time the rebate was \$3.75, which was too high,” explained Bersales. “We don’t want a contractor to go to a homeowner, we want to keep the rebate at the right amount so the program is not vendor driven. We want the homeowner to take the lead in the program.”

Homeowners are also more likely to maintain the new landscape if they are working with an experienced designer and contractor. Unfortunately, some vendors jumped in early and ripped out turf replacing it with artificial turf, now prohibited under the new program guidelines because it’s considered harmful to the earth.



Rebate program funded the transformation of this Fremont Place front garden designed by Camille Cimino.



Under the new program consumers can start the process by filing an application online at SoCal Water \$mart.com, a third party contractor who does the processing for the program. Usually applications are responded to within a week or two, explained Bersales.

The Landscape Transformation program is a two-part application process. In order to receive a rebate, consumers must apply to reserve rebate funds prior to starting their project. After the reservation, they will have 180 days to complete the project and submit their request for a rebate. LADWP staff from Bersales department conduct random inspections to make sure people have correctly completed the work. All the details on the program can be found on the SoCal Water \$mart.com website.

If you're looking design inspiration, there's a talk planned this Saturday at 11 am at Potted, a garden store on Los Feliz Blvd, with Nan Sterman author of "Hot Color, Dry Garden," which features the gardens of local designers, Judy Horton and Cheryl Lerner.

Horton told the Buzz she applauds the efforts of the LADWP to get people to think about their gardens more holistically, adding that's really what gardeners have been doing for centuries.

