#### 1. What plants can I use in my water-efficient landscape?

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 low and/or medium water use plants to meet this requirement, but the City highly encourages the use of drought tolerant and native species. The City's 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 City maintains a list of the most commonly used low and/or medium water use plants in the Sacramento Valley region. 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 applicant's meet the fifty percent (50%) coverage requirement. If an applicant chooses plants that are not included on the City's list of approved plants, the applicant must provide the City with the water use and coverage requirements of the chosen plants prior to beginning the conversion project. High water use plants and trees are excluded from the program and do not meet the program terms and conditions.

#### 2. Can I receive credit for replacing my lawn with artificial turf?

The latest generation of synthetic turf is a grass-like surface covering that replicates lush natural grass in appearance and function. The City will accept artificial turf as a substitute for irrigated lawn. Any artificial turf must be permeable (allowing both air and water to pass through freely) and must meet all other program terms and conditions including, but not limited to, compliance with installation standards

## 3. Can I receive credit for putting in a patio, a walkway or an extension to my driveway?

Yes. If the applicant will be removing turf to install a patio, a walkway or a driveway extension, the City will allow credit if a permeable product is used. Permeable products include pervious pavement, gravel, or brick or flagstone with permeable, mortarless materials for grout lines (such as sand and gravel). 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.

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

In normal water years, no. Turf must be currently maintained. However, turf allowed to die in response to drought conditions may be eligible for funding if participant supplies a dated photograph of the maintained turf with submission of program application. Non-living turf must remain intact until program funding resumes and a pre-inspection can be performed by City staff. Photos dated before March 1, 2014 are not eligible.

# 5. Can I receive credit for replacing my high water use grass with a low water use grass?

No. This program provides incentive to convert grass to alternative types of landscaping, including trees, shrubs and groundcovers. These use less water than even the lowest water use grass. However, the City does encourage homeowners to use low water use grass in those areas where grass is needed or desired outside of this program.

## 6. If I have children and/or a dog, how do I incorporate water efficient landscaping into my yard?

One of the seven principles of water efficient landscaping is functional lawn areas. An applicant does not have to eliminate all of its lawn area to participate. Some conversion projects simply involve reducing the amount of lawn area or creating a buffer area around the edge of an existing lawn.

# 7. What if my Homeowner's Association or CC&Rs requires me to keep grass in my yard?

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.

#### 8. What is mulch and why is it required?

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 2 to 3" layer of mulch is required.

#### 9. Do I get credit for removing my high water use plants?

No. The City's Cash for Grass program focuses solely on the removal of turf grass. However, most shrub beds may be watered more effectively by converting the irrigation system to a drip irrigation system.

10. I have many plants surrounding the grass that I'm removing. Will these plants count toward the 50 percent (50%) coverage requirement? If the total area of an existing front or back yard landscape contains more than seventy-five percent (75%) of living water efficient plant material that is being irrigated with a low volume irrigation system, the fifty percent (50%) living plant coverage requirement can be waived.

#### 11. Why does the City require plants?

This program encourages the use of water efficient landscaping, and the City 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 stormwater runoff and save water.

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

An applicant can choose plants at any size. Planting smaller plants (1 gallon) are less expensive and have a tendency to adapt better to their new environment. The City uses the full mature value of the plant type to determine plant coverage.

### 13. I don't like the desert look. What are my options?

Water efficient landscaping can be much more than rocks and cactus. There are hundreds of plants that use very little, if any, water. With proper design and plant selection, an applicant can accomplish almost any look or feel and still save water. View the City's website for design ideas and photos of water efficient landscapes in our area.

#### 14. Do I have to use a weed barrier?

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, the City requires that it be permeable allowing both water and air to penetrate.

#### 15. Why do I need a filter and pressure regulator?

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.

### 16. What is considered to be an efficient irrigation system?

The installation of an efficient irrigation system begins with good design. A low volume drip system is a proper choice for trees, plants and shrubs applying water directly to the plants roots. For turf areas, systems must apply water uniformly over the desired area with a minimum of overspray into adjacent areas. There are sprinkler heads on the market today that offer low precipitation rates (such as rotating spray heads) that save water and allow the soil to absorb the applied water minimizing any runoff. The City recommends installing a smart irrigation timer that (after proper programming) automatically adjusts itself to provide the right amount of water to your landscape.

#### 17. Are vegetable gardens allowed?

Vegetable gardens are excluded from the Cash for Grass Program. Customers who wish to create a vegetable garden may be eligible for funding through the Residential Irrigation Efficiency Program. See program terms and conditions for eligibility.

#### 18. What should I do with my small side yard?

When converting a front yard landscape, we highly encourage applicants to include the narrow side yard and mow strips as part of their conversion. Turf in these areas can be difficult to maintain and use large amounts of water.

19. What is the average savings on a cash for grass conversion? A preliminary savings study was conducted on Cash for Grass participants. Results will likely improve as more landscape data is analyzed, but initial results show that each square foot of turf removed (and replaced with water efficient landscaping) saves 37 gallons per year per square foot. This equates to a 17% overall reduction in use. For established landscapes, savings improve resulting in savings of 46 gallons per year per square foot removed and a 21% overall reduction in water use.