Landscaping Management Guide

FOR PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS



Scan for Resources

A PROGRAM OF

EAGLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Beyond Lawn

- Waterwise Landscaping
- Biodiversity Enhancement
- Irrigation Efficiency
- Policy Guidance
- Firewise Landscaping
- Community Education

EAGLE RIVER VALLEY'S RESOURCE FOR SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT LANDSCAPING

Beyond Lawn is an Eagle County Conservation District program that helps homeowners and HOAs replace thirsty landscaping with waterwise, biodiverse, fire-smart alternatives. Through low-cost property evaluations, expert guidance, robust online resources, and financial support for upgrades, Beyond Lawn makes it easier to cut water use, lower maintenance, and build a landscape that actually fits our mountain climate — without giving up a yard you love.

SERVICES



Low Cost Landscape & Irrigation Evaluations



Financial Incentives for Upgrades



Resources & Educational Opportunities

OBJECTIVES



Establishing a Network of Qualified Landscape Professionals



Guiding resilient landscaping policy



Broadening community outreach

Scan or visit beyondlawn.org/professionals for the Sustainable Landscaping Guide, Landscaping Management Guide, and Landscape Design Guide.

beyondlawn.org **(970) 236-1165**

beyondlawn@eccdistrict.org

For information on other ECCD programs, visit eccdistrict.org

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Start Here

This guide is for property managers who oversee landscapes on behalf of owners. It's a set of tools and checklists to help you catch problems early and work well with your landscape contractors.



Why it matters: healthy landscapes mean fewer surprises. A leak or an overwatered zone can run for weeks before anyone notices, and it usually shows up as a high bill, a dead tree, or a soggy foundation. Water saved on the landscape can free up budget for something else, and the same preemptive action lowers wildfire risk.



In this guide: water tools and priorities, a seasonal checklist, fire mitigation, and habitat considerations. Have HOA common areas? See beyondlawn.org/hoas. Beyond Lawn is a program of the Eagle County Conservation District.

Water Data & Tools

Catch problems before they become headaches

You can't be at every property every day. The right tools let you see what's happening from anywhere.

STEP 1: TRACK WATER USE

Usage history makes a spike stand out.

Ask the water provider or homeowner for access to usage history and set up high-use or leak alerts. In ERWSD's service area, the MyWater portal shows hourly use. Keep at least two seasons of history for each property. Installing a flow sensor or automatic shutoff valve is another great way to be notified of unusual use or leaks.

STEP 2: KNOW WHAT THE LANDSCAPE NEEDS

A water budget is your yardstick.

It estimates what a landscape should use, based on plant types, area and exposure. Comparing it to actual use shows whether a property has a scheduling problem, an equipment problem, or both. A Beyond Lawn evaluation report includes one.

STEP 3: USE A SMART CONTROLLER

Remote access means fewer site visits.

A smart controller adjusts to the weather and gives you, the owner, and your contractor access to the schedule. Add a flow sensor where you can. It can shut down a broken zone and alert you right away.

STEP 4: KEEP A SIMPLE PROPERTY LOG

One file per property saves hours.

Keep the zone map, controller schedule, shutoff locations, repair dates and plant replacements together. It makes contractor hand-offs easier, and it gives you answers when an owner asks.

Good Practices

Waterwise care, written into the scope of work

Most landscape contracts are written around mowing and cleanup. Adding a few lines on irrigation and plant care is one of the lowest-cost ways to save water and protect the landscape.



IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT

Put it in the contract.

- ☐ Seasonal or monthly controller adjustments, spring through fall
- ☐ Every zone checked at startup and mid-season
- ☐ Repairs noted by zone and date
- ☐ Zone map and schedule kept current
- ☐ Inventory of potential upgrades prioritized by water saving potential



WATERWISE PLANT CARE

Waterwise care is different from turf care.

- ☐ An establishment watering plan for new perennial plantings for the first three years
- ☐ Native plant care and early weeding
- ☐ Seasonal cutbacks that leave some habitat
- ☐ Drip, not spray, on planting beds where possible



ACCESS AND TRACKING

Stay in the loop without a site visit.

- ☐ You keep access to the smart controller
- ☐ Leak and flow alerts come to you
- ☐ Service notes or a visit log you can check
- ☐ Shutoff locations marked on the zone map



QUALIFICATIONS TO LOOK FOR

Hire for waterwise skills.

- ☐ Certified irrigation staff (QWEL, CIT or CLIA)
- ☐ Experience with native and waterwise plantings
- ☐ Proof of insurance
- ☐ Beyond Lawn training

Spring & Summer

Work through these in order each year

Timing shifts with elevation. Higher properties start later and shut down earlier.

EARLY SPRING (AS SNOW MELTS)

Walk the property for winter damage.

- □ Broken heads, plow damage, salt burn, vole damage, and browsed shrubs
- □ Clear dead plants and debris within 5 feet of buildings
- □ Leave stems and leaf litter in beds until soil reaches about 50°F
- □ Schedule regular watering to start after the last hard freeze

LATE SPRING (STARTUP)

Start the season efficient.

- □ Test every zone for leaks, broken heads, and overspray
- □ Set a spring schedule, which needs far less than midsummer
- □ Confirm alerts and remote access work
- □ Weed early, top up mulch, and replace winter losses. Plant perennials early.

EARLY SUMMER

Step up as it warms.

- □ Increase watering as temperatures rise
- □ Check new plantings for establishment watering; adjust accordingly
- □ Keep weeding, because the first weeks set up the season
- □ Compare water use to last year

MIDSUMMER AND LATE SUMMER

Hold steady through the heat.

- □ Mid-season check of every zone
- □ Adjust for weather and follow watering restrictions
- □ Keep beds near buildings watered through dry spells
- □ Mow grasses near structures to 4 inches or less
- □ Prioritize watering trees, shrubs, and perennials during drought years (in that order)

Fall & Winter

Fall is when next year gets easier

It's the best time to plant, plan upgrades and set the budget. Timing shifts with elevation, so higher properties shut down earlier.

EARLY FALL

Plant and plan while the soil is warm.

- ☐ Step the controller down as nights cool
- ☐ Plant perennials, shrubs, and trees
- ☐ Seed native grasses and wildflowers in late summer for spring germination
- ☐ Ask for a priced list of recommended upgrades

LATE FALL (SHUTDOWN)

Shut down before permanent snow.

- ☐ Blow out the system, usually early to mid-October
- ☐ Clean gutters and clear needles and debris near buildings
- ☐ Leave some stems and leaves in beds for overwintering insects
- ☐ Protect young trees and shrubs from deer, elk and rodents

WINTER

Protect what you planted.

- ☐ Water evergreens until the ground freezes if precipitation is scarce
- ☐ Stake edges along plowed paths and keep de-icing salt away from plants
- ☐ Mark heads and drip lines near plow routes
- ☐ Review the season's water use and property log

PLAN NEXT YEAR

Set up a smoother season.

- ☐ Share a short season summary with the owner
- ☐ Get approval for upgrades and conversions
- ☐ Encourage the owner to book a Beyond Lawn evaluation
- ☐ Renew contracts with waterwise scope

Waterwise Is Firewise



Routine care goes a long way

Waterwise plants give an approaching fire less fuel. Most of the valley sits in the wildland-urban interface, and a little routine care around buildings goes a long way.

Around Buildings



Work out from the walls.

Start with the first 30 feet. In the first 5 feet, rock, gravel and pavers work best, with low, non-woody plants. Near the structure, keep grasses mowed to 4 inches or less, space shrub clumps apart, and remove junipers near homes where possible.



Add a spring and fall fuel cleanup to the maintenance contract.

Encourage owners to request a free assessment. Eagle Valley Wildland and Eagle County's REALFire program offer free property assessments.

In Vail, Fire Free Five reimburses part of the cost of a 5-foot noncombustible zone, and the town is moving toward requiring one around every building.

Maintenance Is Mitigation



Routine care reduces fire risk.

Rake needles, leaves and debris within 5 feet of buildings and decks. Farther out, raking does little and can harm trees. Clean gutters, prune branches over roofs, remove dead plants, and keep beds near buildings watered through dry spells.



Owners have options. HOAs can't ban fire-hardened fencing, decking or roofing (HB 24-1091). For plant lists, see the Beyond Lawn Fire-Resilient Landscaping Guide. This page is for information only and is not legal advice.

Landscapes for Wildlife

Often less work, not more

Supporting wildlife can save labor. Native plants need fewer inputs, and shifting some fall cleanup to spring leaves shelter for pollinators.





PLANT FOR BLOOMS ALL SEASON

Pollinators need flowers from spring to fall.

Mix early, mid and late bloomers, and favor natives, which support the most native bees, butterflies and moths. Layers of groundcovers, perennials and shrubs add food and cover. The Plant Explorer filters by bloom time.



LEAVE SOME HABITAT STANDING

Many native bees and insects overwinter in stems and leaf litter.

Leave some stems and leaves in beds over winter, and cut perennials back to 6 to 8 inches. Wait until soil reaches about 50°F before a full spring cleanup.



ASK YOUR CONTRACTOR

Small requests add up.

Ask whether your contractor can use pesticides and herbicides sparingly and only where needed, leave some stems and leaves over winter, and add native plants when replacing losses.

Next Steps

Help yourself, learn with us, or go further

Start wherever it makes sense for you. These resources are open to every professional, whether or not you work with Beyond Lawn.

HELP YOURSELF

Free online guides and tools answer most questions.

The Design, Irrigation, DIY and Maintenance Guides and the Plant Explorer are all at beyondlawn.org. The Resource Directory on the next page lists every link.

LEARN WITH US

Workshops, events and local expertise.

Join a Beyond Lawn workshop or event (beyondlawn.org/workshops-&-events). ECCD also offers affordable soil tests and native seed mixes at eccdistrict.org.

GO FURTHER

Help owners take the next step.

A Beyond Lawn evaluation gives an owner a full plan, and rebates can help fund projects while funding allows. Owners book and apply themselves, and you're welcome to join them. Owner sign-up: bit.ly/beyondlawn-signup. Rebates: beyondlawn.org/rebates. Contractors: bit.ly/bl-pros-signup.

TALK TO US

We're happy to talk through a project, a plant list or an irrigation question. Working with an HOA? Point the board to bit.ly/bl-hoa-signup. beyondlawn.org · beyondlawn@eccdistrict.org · (970) 236-1165

Beyond Lawn Resources

Everything we offer, in one place

Help yourself, or work with us. Our free online tools answer most landscape questions. When you're ready for a closer look at your property or community, our services can help.

SELF-SERVE RESOURCES

Free guides and tools, available anytime.

- Plant Explorer · beyondlawn.org/plant-explorer
- Design Guide · design.beyondlawn.org
- Fire-Resilient Landscaping Guide (in the Design Guide)
- Irrigation Guide · irrigation.beyondlawn.org
- DIY Guide · diy.beyondlawn.org
- Maintenance Guide · maintenance.beyondlawn.org
- HOA Guides · beyondlawn.org/hoas
- Professional Guides · beyondlawn.org/professionals
- Recursos en Español · beyondlawn.org/recursos-en-español
- Workshops & Events · beyondlawn.org/workshops-&-events
- FAQ · beyondlawn.org/faq

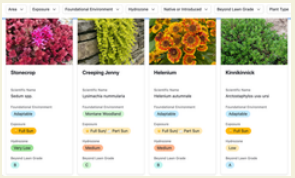
SERVICES

Hands-on help for homeowners and HOAs.

- Landscape & Irrigation Evaluations · beyondlawn.org/evaluations
- Beyond Lawn Rebates · beyondlawn.org/rebates
- HOA Evaluations (16 or fewer common-area zones) · bit.ly/bl-hoa-signup
- HOA Mini-Grants · beyondlawn.org/hoas
- Soil Tests & Native Seed Mixes (ECCD) · eccdistrict.org/seed
- Free Wildfire Assessments (Eagle County REALFire) · bit.ly/bl-realfire

Questions? beyondlawn@eccdistrict.org · (970) 236-1165
Newsletter: bit.ly/beyondlawn-signup · @beyond.lawn
Professional list: bit.ly/bl-pros-signup · Survey: bit.ly/bl-pro-survey

RESOURCES



Plant Explorer



Web-based & Downloadable Guides

SERVICES



Low Cost Landscape & Irrigation Evaluations



Financial Incentives for Upgrades



Resources & Educational Opportunities

Meet the Team

A PROGRAM OF THE EAGLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Eagle County Conservation District is dedicated to preserving and restoring our county's natural resources - soil, water, air, plants, animals, and people - through local projects, partnerships, research, and education. We work with the community to conserve our natural landscapes and to enhance individual conservation efforts, promoting ecological balance in our region for generations to come

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EAGLE RIVER COALITION

The Eagle River Coalition advocates for the health of the Upper Colorado and Eagle River watersheds through research, education and projects. We strive to protect and enhance the high-quality natural, scenic and economic values that our rivers and tributaries provide to the citizens, visitors and wildlife of the Eagle River and Colorado River watersheds located in Eagle County

COLORADO
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

COLORADO RIVER DISTRICT
PROTECTING WESTERN COLORADO WATER SINCE 1937

EAGLE RIVER WATER & SANITATION DISTRICT

SINGLETREE

EDWARDS COLORADO

AVON COLORADO

Town of Gypsum EST. 1911

EAGLE COUNTY WILDFIRE COLLABORATIVE

Irrigation Analysis
Less Water ... More Green

waternow alliance

ET Irrigation

Beyond Lawn