Sustainable Landscaping Guide

FOR LANDSCAPE & IRRIGATION 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

A PROGRAM OF THE EAGLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Start Here

Clients want landscapes that look good, cost less to water, attract beneficial wildlife, and hold up to drought and wildfire. This is a quick reference for everyone who installs and maintains landscapes in the valley, whether or not you work with Beyond Lawn.



Why it matters: the average landscape in Eagle County uses about 35,000 gallons of water a season, and most of the water used outdoors is lost to runoff and evaporation rather than returning to the river. The same choices that save water can also reduce fire risk near homes and give pollinators and wildlife a place to live. Small changes add up across every property you care for.

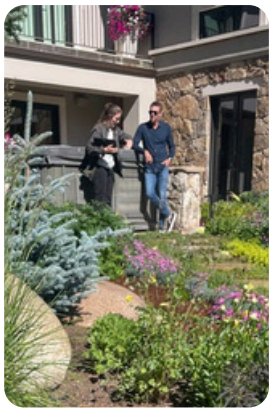


In this guide: irrigation, fire, habitat, installation and care, and working with Beyond Lawn participants. New construction? See the Landscape Design Guide for developers and designers or the Beyond Lawn Waterwise Design Guide for general information about waterwise landscapes.

A Changing Landscape

Waterwise work is an opportunity

Clients are asking for something new, and you're the people who can build it.



What's Changing

The work clients ask for is shifting.

- Water: clients want lower bills and landscapes that hold up through drought and watering restrictions.
- Wildfire: more owners are asking what to do in the space around their homes.
- Codes: state law and county code now limit new nonfunctional turf on new and redeveloped landscapes.
- Incentives: water providers, towns and Beyond Lawn are helping homeowners pay for upgrades.



This is new work, not less work. A converted landscape still needs design, installation, irrigation and ongoing care, and it needs skilled people to do it well.

We're here to help you grow. Beyond Lawn doesn't compete with contractors or tell clients who to hire. Our job is to build demand for waterwise work and point clients to people who can do it.

Early movers stand out. Companies that know native plants, efficient irrigation, and fire-smart design and mitigation are the ones clients will call first.

Why Work With Us

Programs that bring clients to you

Clients who are ready: evaluation reports give clients tailored ideas, decision-making resources, and financial incentives to start their projects.

A place on the list: training and the preferred professional list will connect you with homeowners, HOAs and property managers looking for waterwise skills.



Irrigation That Holds Up

Getting the most from the system you inherit

Most wasted water comes from outdated schedules, worn or mismatched components, and plants watered in mismatched zones. Most of the systems you work on were installed by someone else, years ago, for a different landscape. A few adjustments can make a big difference.

STEP 1: START WITH A WATER BUDGET

Know roughly what the landscape needs before you set run times.

Group the property into high-, medium- and low-water areas, measure each, calculate the water budget, and compare the total to what the property actually uses. If the client has a Beyond Lawn evaluation report, it includes a water budget and a suggested schedule. Not sure how to make a water budget? Sign up for professional communications to hear about upcoming training opportunities.

STEP 2: MATCH ZONES TO PLANTS

Hydrozones only work when they match irrigation zones.

Where you can, put perennial, shrub, and tree beds on drip, keep overhead spray irrigation on turf, and avoid mixing turf and other landscape types on one valve. Separate sun from shade, too. When you inherit a mixed zone, note it as an upgrade to recommend.

STEP 3: PROGRAM FOR THE SITE

Plant type, soil, slope and sun all change how long and how often a zone should run.

Most controllers don't ask about any of them. Use cycle-and-soak on turf and slopes, and use seasonal adjust to step watering up toward midsummer and back down in fall. Move your clients toward smart controllers with weather-based control and advanced management features included.

STEP 4: INSPECT, FIX, DOCUMENT

Check every zone, at minimum once during startup and once mid-season.

Look for leaks, broken and tilted heads, clogged emitters, pressure problems, and overspray onto pavement. Make an inventory of the potential upgrades that can be done, and prioritize them based on water savings. Keep a simple zone map and schedule on file, because it saves time on every visit after that. Scheduling and upgrade details are in the Irrigation Guide at irrigation.beyondlawn.org.

Waterwise Is Firewise

The same choices save water and reduce fire risk

Waterwise plants give an approaching fire less fuel, which helps reduce its intensity as it nears homes. Most of the valley sits in the wildland-urban interface, and more clients are asking what they can do to better protect their homes and communities. You're often the person best placed to help.



0–5 FEET: KEEP IT NONCOMBUSTIBLE

This is where embers land and catch.

Rock, gravel, pavers and other hard surfaces work best, with low, non-woody perennials and groundcovers. Avoid wood mulch, shrubs, and trees in this zone. In Vail, Fire Free Five reimburses part of the cost, and the town is moving toward requiring this zone around every building.



5–30 FEET: LOW AND SPACED

Break up fuels so fire can't climb or spread.

Mow grasses near structures to 4 inches or less. Space shrub clumps, and remove or relocate shrubs that act as ladder fuels into tree crowns. Limb trees up 6 to 10 feet or a third of their height, whichever is less. Remove junipers near the home where possible.



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 nearest to buildings watered through dry spells. Watering trees is the highest priority during drought years.



POINT CLIENTS TO FREE HELP

Assessments, plant lists, and legal backing.

Eagle Valley Wildland and Eagle County's REALFire program offer free property assessments. HOAs can't ban fire-hardened fencing, decking or roofing (HB 24-1091). For plants, see the Beyond Lawn Fire-Resilient Landscaping Guide and the Plant Explorer's firewise filters.

Landscapes for Wildlife

Small changes in care make a big difference

More clients want pollinator gardens and landscapes that feel alive. Native plants support local bees, butterflies and birds, and they need fewer inputs.





PLANT FOR BLOOMS ALL SEASON

Pollinators need flowers from spring to fall, not just in June.

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



LEAVE SOME HABITAT STANDING

Many native bees overwinter in hollow stems, leaf litter and bare soil.

Leave some stems and leaves in beds over winter, and cut perennials back to 6 to 8 inches. In spring, wait until soil reaches about 50°F before a full cleanup. Rocks, brush piles and dead wood add habitat with no water at all.



GO EASY ON CHEMICALS

Pesticides can harm pollinators and the animals that eat them.

Use them sparingly and target them carefully. Identify insects before treating, because many beetles, flies and moths are pollinators. Neonicotinoids are especially harmful to bees.

Installation & Care

A converted landscape needs a different kind of care

Waterwise landscapes are lower maintenance, not no maintenance. The first three seasons decide whether a conversion thrives, and good establishment care means fewer replacements and happier clients.

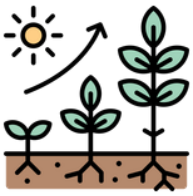
SITE PREP AND PLANTING



Most failures start before planting.

Remove turf completely by sod cutting, solarizing, sheet mulching or herbicide. Sheet mulching builds rich soil, but many natives prefer leaner soils, so test before amending. Plant at grade, water in thoroughly, and mulch 2 to 4 inches deep — kept off plant crowns.

SLEEP, CREEP, LEAP



Establishment takes about three seasons.

Year 1, water regularly while roots establish, and keep weeds down. Water use may go up. Year 2, slowly back off so roots grow deeper. Year 3, bring watering down to what mature plants need. Explain this to clients in writing at the start.

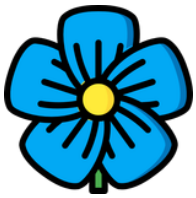
SEASONAL CARE



The first weeks of the season set up the rest of it.

Weed early. Mow native grasses high, if at all, in midsummer and late summer. Leave ornamental grasses standing until early spring. Blow out systems before permanent snow, usually early to mid-October, and keep watering evergreens until the ground freezes.

PLANT SELECTION



Mountain conditions are harder on plants than hardiness zones suggest.

Altitude, low humidity and intense sun all take a toll. Choose plants proven at the property's elevation, and buy for a zone colder than the one you're in. The Plant Explorer, DIY Guide (diy.beyondlawn.org) and Maintenance Guide (maintenance.beyondlawn.org) can help.

Working With Clients

How Beyond Lawn helps your clients say yes

Evaluations and rebates turn "someday" projects into this season's projects. Here's how they work, so you can help clients plan and get paid back.

ONE PROJECT EACH SEASON

Past evaluation recipients can apply for rebates each year.

While funding allows, homeowners can earn Beyond Lawn rebates for specific waterwise actions, like upgrading irrigation or replacing turf. It makes sense to get an evaluation once, then plan one project each season. Current actions and amounts are at beyondlawn.org/rebates.

HOMEOWNERS APPLY, YOU HELP

Rebates start with a Beyond Lawn evaluation.

The homeowner books the evaluation and applies for the rebate. Contractors can't apply on a client's behalf, but you can make it easy by helping take before and after photos and telling your clients about the rebates available to Beyond Lawn evaluees.

FOLLOW THE EVALUATION REPORT

The report is the client's plan.

It includes a list of priorities, opportunities, and recommendations for water, fire, and habitat improvements to the property. Ask your client for a copy.

HOA PROJECTS

HOAs can apply for Beyond Lawn mini-grants for irrigation projects.

Labor must be performed by a certified irrigation contractor (QWEL, CIT or CLIA). Details are at beyondlawn.org/hoas.

Artificial turf isn't eligible for Beyond Lawn rebates.

Getting Involved

Certifications, training, and the preferred list

Beyond Lawn participation is always optional. Homeowners, HOAs and property managers increasingly ask for certified, waterwise-trained professionals, and we want to help connect them with you.

IRRIGATION CERTIFICATIONS

Clients and HOAs look for CLIA, CIT or QWEL.

CLIA (Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor) and CIT (Certified Irrigation Technician) are Irrigation Association certifications. QWEL (Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper) is a WaterSense-labeled program. QWEL fits small and medium systems; large or complex systems call for CLIA or CIT. QWEL certification is offered each spring.

TRAINING (IN DEVELOPMENT)

Training for local professionals is on the way.

It will cover waterwise installation, irrigation efficiency, plant selection, maintenance and care, and we're always open to hearing more about what would help you. We are also looking for landscape companies and independent contractors to provide Beyond Lawn partner evaluations. Sign up to hear when sessions open.

THE PREFERRED PROFESSIONAL LIST

Training will be the path onto the list.

We'll share the list with homeowners, HOAs, and property managers and other organizations looking for waterwise and sustainable landscaping work. Beyond Lawn doesn't certify or endorse contractors, and clients always choose and hire their own.

SIGN UP

Join the professional list.

Get training dates, program updates and changes that affect your clients at bit.ly/bl-pros-signup. Tell us what would help your business at bit.ly/bl-pro-survey, and follow @Beyond.Lawn for project ideas and events.

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.

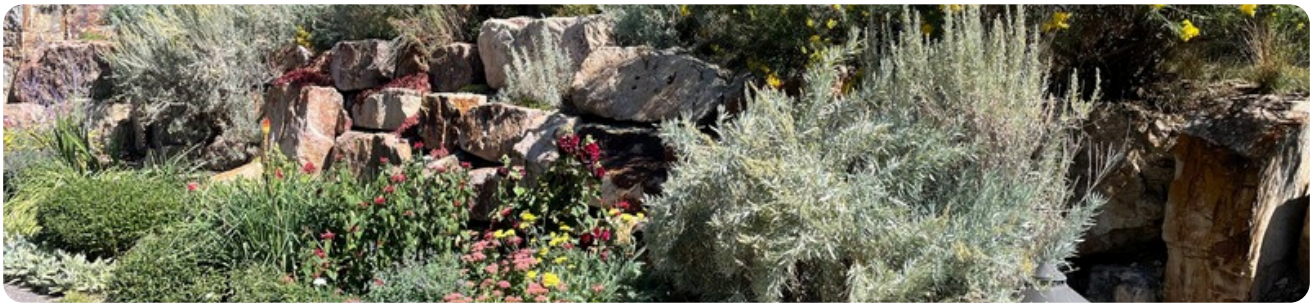
GO FURTHER

Join the professional list and point clients to our programs.

Sign up for training updates and the preferred professional list at bit.ly/bl-pros-signup. Clients can sign up for evaluations at bit.ly/beyondlawn-signup and find rebates at beyondlawn.org/rebates.

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

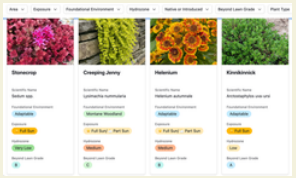
SERVICES

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