

What is the Rainscaping Lincoln - Sustainable Landscapes Cost Share Program?

The Rainscaping Lincoln - Sustainable Landscapes Cost Share Program is a rebate offered by the City of Lincoln Watershed Management Division to property owners for approved projects. The program reimburses applicants for 50 percent of qualifying expenses (maximum reimbursement amount shall not exceed \$2000 per applicant) for rainscaping projects intended to improve water quality, reduce runoff, and facilitate infiltration.

Are you currently accepting applications?

The application period is March 17 through April 25, 2025 (or until funding runs out).

Is there a limit on how many applications will be accepted?

Funding for the program is limited. Therefore, a limited number of applications will be accepted. Applications will be reviewed in the order in which they were received. Applications may be approved, denied or waitlisted, depending on several factors including completeness of applications, eligibility of proposed projects, and remaining funds. Applying for this program does not guarantee funding. Applicants must receive approval in order to be eligible for reimbursement.

Who is eligible to apply?

This program is open to Lincoln property owners. To qualify, you must live within the Lincoln city limits and own the property where the project will take place. Businesses and organizations may also be eligible to apply. For questions regarding business and organization-specific eligibility requirements, please contact Watershed Management at 402-441-4959 or OnlyRain@lincoln.ne.gov.

What projects qualify for reimbursement?

Qualifying rainscaping projects include rain gardens, bioswales, and Waterwise lawns. In addition, up to two rain barrels and/or two approved trees may be added to any qualifying project. All projects must be approved by Watershed Management prior to installation.

Can I install a rainscaping project if I have a drainage problem?

The purpose of a rainscaping project is to allow more rain soak in where it lands. Although certain aspects of these projects may help divert water on the surface away from your home and other structures, they are not recommended for properties currently experiencing problems with water seeping through the basement walls or floor or properties where a sump pump runs continuously.

Is there a minimum cost requirement?

The purpose of this program is to improve water quality, reduce runoff, and facilitate infiltration. Therefore, we encourage project designs that take the property owner's entire landscape into consideration, rather than focusing on one small area. There is no minimum cost requirement. However, applicants should understand that rainscaping projects are generally not inexpensive endeavors and certain expenses must be incurred in order for the projects to function as intended.

What expenses are eligible for reimbursement?

Reimbursable expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

Rain Gardens/Bioswales:

- Approved native or hardy introduced plants appropriate for rain gardens or bioswales
- Soil amendments (e.g. compost, topsoil, etc.) to increase soil fertility and infiltration rate
- Hardwood mulch
- Stone to prevent erosion in overflow and inlet areas
- Downspout extensions (including buried downspouts) or stone needed to direct water to the rain garden or bioswale
- Soil grading to direct water to the rain garden or bioswale
- Rental equipment fees for installing the rain garden or bioswale (e.g. rototiller, etc.)

Waterwise Lawns:

- Rental equipment fees for removing existing lawn and preparing the seed bed (e.g. rototiller, sod cutter, etc.)
- Soil amendments (e.g. compost, topsoil, etc.) to increase soil fertility and infiltration rate
- Soil grading to redirect and slow the flow of water moving across the lawn
- Approved native or deep rooting turfgrass (e.g. buffalograss, blue grama, fine fescues, etc.) seed, hydroseed, or plugs to establish a new lawn
- Native groundcovers, sedges, and bee lawns are suitable alternatives

Rain Barrels (Add-On):

- Rain barrel and parts (e.g. spigot, overflow, screen, etc.)
- Gutter additions and downspout extensions to direct water to the rain barrel
- Materials to construct a rain barrel platform

Trees (Add-On)

- Trees well-suited for eastern Nebraska (**must** be on Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's list of approved species, pay close attention to the notes for each species)
- Planting kits (e.g. stakes, mulch, tree wrap, etc.)

General/Miscellaneous Expenses:

- Design and installation labor performed by a landscape company or contractor for rainscaping projects or add-ons
- Attendance of a rain garden, rain barrel, or stormwater workshop or educational class

What expenses are ineligible for reimbursement?

Non-reimbursable expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

Rain Gardens/Bioswales:

- Unapproved plants including annuals, vegetables, and invasive species
- Ornamental features (e.g. lawn ornaments, bird baths or feeders, decorative boulders, landscape lighting, edging, etc.)

Waterwise Lawns:

- Overseeding an existing lawn
- Unapproved turfgrasses including shallow rooting and water intensive species, as well as species inappropriate for our area (e.g. bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, zoysia, etc.)

Rain Barrels (Add-On):

- Ornamental features (e.g. decoration)
- Rain barrels as a stand-alone project

Trees (Add-On):

- Unapproved tree species and/or varieties
- Purchase price greater than \$300 per tree (excluding installation)
- Tree trimming or removal
- Trees as a stand-alone project

General/Miscellaneous Expenses:

- Tools purchased (shovel, rake, wheelbarrow, power tools, etc.)
- Irrigation equipment including hoses and sprinklers
- Retaining walls or raised garden beds
- Area drains, French drains, infiltration trenches, drywells, etc.
- Water or other utility bills, gasoline, etc.
- Design and installation labor done by the homeowner and/or a non-professional
- Additional landscaping or dirt work that does not pertain to the rainscaping projects
- Otherwise eligible expenses above and beyond the maximum reimbursable amount
- Expenses for work performed or projects completed prior to acceptance into the program
- Any other expenses City staff determines in its discretion to be inappropriate or unrelated to the completion of the rainscaping projects