



Landscaping for Clean Water Grant Process Frequently Asked Questions



WHERE DOES THE LANDSCAPING FOR CLEAN WATER (LCW) GRANT FUNDING COME FROM?

The LCW program is administered through the Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) and includes providing the Intro, Design, Shoreline, and Maintenance workshops, written materials, and technical assistance to landowners. The LCW program costs along with the \$250 grant expense are supported by the following Dakota County Watershed Management Organizations:

Black Dog
Watershed Management Organization

Eagan – Inver Grove Heights
Watershed Management Organization

Lower Minnesota River
Watershed Management District

Lower Mississippi River
Watershed Management Organization

North Cannon River
Watershed Management Organization

Vermillion River Watershed
Joint Powers Organization

WHAT IS THE PROCESS AFTER MY APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED?

Applications are accepted until midnight of the submission date, including via email. Your application submission will be reviewed for completeness (application, cost estimate, project/planting plan & location map). Applications will be reviewed and ranked within their watershed group to determine which projects will be funded. Because there are three funding rounds, approximately 1/3 of the available grants will be awarded for each round.

HOW ARE THE GRANT RECIPIENTS CHOSEN?

The awarding of grants is a competitive process. Taken into consideration are the number of grants available in the project watershed, the location and type of project being installed and the benefit to our water resources (i.e., raingardens rank higher over shorelines and native gardens; project size (100 sq. ft. minimum); projects where current run-off goes directly into the storm sewer are higher priority than project where run-off flows to a vegetated area).

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY APPLICATION IF I APPLY AND DO NOT RECEIVE A GRANT?

If you apply for and don't receive a grant in Rounds 1 or 2, you will have the option to continue your grant through to the next round, or you may choose to withdraw your application.

After Round 3 grants are awarded, the unfunded applications can be continued to the next year with only a new application page if no significant changes are made to the submitted plans. If you decide to significantly change your project plan before re-applying, you are welcome to attend the Design Course again (fee waived).

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER MY GRANT IS AWARDED?

An award email will be sent within one week of the grant deadline with instructions for scheduling your **initial site visit and project layout**. Utilities will need to be marked prior to this visit. **No work can begin on your project until after the initial site visit.** This appointment is scheduled for 1 ½ hours and you **are** required to be at this appointment. Shoreline projects may follow a different schedule.

A **midpoint project visit** is required for all raingardens. This will be scheduled after your berm and basin have been shaped and your soil amended, and before plants or mulch are installed. This appointment is scheduled for ½ hour, and you **are** required to be at this appointment. Additional mid-point visits may be scheduled as needed and technical help is available via email at LCW@co.dakota.mn.us or by phone at 651-480-7777.

A **final site visit** is required for all project gardens. Native garden plant tags will be checked for Minnesota native plant species. A garden sign will be placed if requested. This appointment takes 15 minutes, and you **are not** required to be at this appointment.

Please Note: Dakota SWCD business hours are 8:00 am – 4:30 pm Monday – Friday; all project site visits are completed within that schedule.

CAN I APPLY FOR MORE THAN ONE GRANT?

Only one grant per household/property per season will be awarded. Once you have paid for and attended a Design Course, you are eligible to attend the course in subsequent years (fee waived) to design a new project and apply for another grant. Projects from new Design Course participants will be considered first for grants.

HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE TO INSTALL A RAINGARDEN?

Through the grant process, you have 12 weeks to complete your project. How long it will take you specifically depends on your project type, project size, if water conveyance is required, how hard you want to work and the weather! A raingarden can be labor intensive with sod removal, digging, edging, amending soil, planting, and adding mulch. Some people hire out the heavy work and some make it a family project. A typical project that is around 200 square feet usually takes 4-6 days with 2 people. Our staff are there along the way to guide you in the installation and to take away the guesswork.

HOW MUCH DOES A GARDEN COST TO INSTALL?

The average size of a project is around 200 square feet with a typical material and equipment cost of \$400-\$700. Hiring a contractor to install the project will cost more. Projects must be at least 100 ft² in size to be eligible. For projects that are estimated to cost less than \$250.00, grant amounts may be adjusted so that grants do not exceed the actual project costs.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED A "NATIVE PLANT"?

For LCW purposes, a native plant is a plant that is *native specifically to Minnesota*. To check plant species, go to <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/> or plants.sc.egov.usda.gov. Note: Both websites include plants that are non-native to Minnesota. Click on each species to check for its origin or native status.

While shopping for plants, keep in mind that some native plant suppliers will carry plants labeled native that *are not* native to Minnesota, but are native to other areas of the U.S. Staff at the native plant suppliers usually guide you in selecting plants native to Minnesota.

Checking the plants scientific name will ensure you are buying a native plant vs. a cultivar. If a cultivar, the plant's cultivar name is usually in apostrophes (i.e., Echinacea 'Hot Papaya') on the plant tag. Native plants are required for shorelines and native gardens. While raingardens are not required to contain all native plant species, it is encouraged to do so.

FINDING NATIVE PLANTS THROUGH ALL 3 GRANT ROUNDS

Purchasing plants at a spring native plant sale is always fun. However, if you purchase plants early and then aren't approved for a grant until Round 2 or 3 you will have to keep watering the plants in their pots (place pots in the shade and off cement), or plant them in a holding bed until they are needed. Overall plant selection can become more limited later in the year. However, there are native plant suppliers who take orders for late season delivery of both dormant plants and plugs. For a 100-sf garden you would need approximately 44 plants or plugs (assuming 18" spacing).

WHEN DOES THE GRANT MONEY GET DISTRIBUTED?

Grant checks are mailed one time each month. After your final site visit and project approval, a request for payment will be submitted to the SWCD Board of Directors at their next Board meeting. The Board meets the second Thursday of each month and grant checks will be distributed within two weeks of the Board meeting.

I HAD MY UTILITIES MARKED FOR THE DESIGN COURSE IN APRIL AND AM NOT GOING TO APPLY FOR A GRANT UNTIL ROUND 3. DO I NEED TO HAVE MY UTILITIES RE-MARKED?

Having your utilities marked prior to the Design Course ensures that your project is planned for a suitable space. Unless you can still see the markings on the ground or have left the flags in place, **you DO need to have your utilities re-marked prior to your initial site visit/project layout**. This is a simple step that ensures the safety of our staff digging in your yard and your own safety in beginning your project.

NOW THAT I HAVE A RAINGARDEN OR NATIVE GARDEN, WHAT DO I DO TO MAINTAIN IT?

You will receive a general maintenance brochure with your grant payment. The SWCD also offers a FREE maintenance workshop each spring that will provide additional maintenance tips. After completing your project, you will be automatically notified via email of this workshop. We are also always available via email and phone to support you!