



Lake Whatcom Homeowner Incentive Program

WATERSHED-FRIENDLY NATIVE LANDSCAPING PROGRAM HANDBOOK

January 2025

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Introduction

Lake Whatcom, the drinking water source for more than 100,000 Whatcom County residents, has seen a marked decline in water quality over the past 50 years. Excess nutrients, particularly phosphorus, generated by residential properties and conveyed to the lake through drainage systems have caused summer algal blooms and a significant decrease in dissolved oxygen levels in the lake. In April 2016, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized the Lake Whatcom Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study, which sets in motion a 30- to 50-year cleanup effort focused on reducing phosphorus inputs to Lake Whatcom by nearly 87% compared to current conditions.

In order to address this water quality issue, the City of Bellingham uses public funds to manage runoff and clean up stormwater through large-scale stormwater treatment facilities within public rights-of-way. However, much of the developed land in the watershed lies outside of the reach of these infrastructure projects and additional action is necessary to clean up Lake Whatcom. The Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP) was developed to help homeowners make landscape improvements that reduce the amount of polluted runoff leaving their property and flowing downstream to the lake. HIP improvements compliment water quality protection achieved through public stormwater treatment facilities and are an important part of the overall lake clean-up effort.

For more information on Lake Whatcom water quality and other lake management programs visit www.lakewhatcom.whatcomcounty.org.

Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP) Overview

The Lake Whatcom Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP) is a City of Bellingham (City) non-regulatory program that provides technical assistance and cost share incentives for homeowners who voluntarily elect to install stormwater best management practices (BMPs) that reduce phosphorus runoff into Lake Whatcom. HIP was originally developed under a Washington State Department of Ecology grant from 2011 to 2015. At the end of this pilot period, the City conducted an extensive program evaluation. Findings from this evaluation were used to develop a revised HIP, which began in 2017. HIP is currently available to owners of developed parcels draining to Lake Whatcom.

HIP offers two levels of assistance to property owners:

- The **watershed-friendly native landscaping program** offers technical assistance and reimbursement to install native plants and spread mulch to create improved landscaped areas on any parcel in the Lake Whatcom watershed.
- The **water quality treatment program** offers different types of improvements, beyond just landscaping, to owners of shoreline parcels, houses and yards that drain directly to streams, and properties with large lawns or those with lots of hard surfaces. These properties offer the greatest opportunity for phosphorus reduction. To see if your parcel qualifies for these benefits, speak to a HIP staff member at your site visit or through the HIP website.

Native Landscaping for Water Quality Protection

Converting lawn or traditional residential landscaping to landscaping that uses native plants and mulch is a simple and cost-effective method to reduce phosphorus pollution and protect water quality. Native landscaping re-creates the natural soil chemistry and biology found in forested areas. Plants and mulch capture, neutralize, and recycle phosphorus, turning extra nutrients into healthy plants and soil. In addition, up to 40% of rainfall is captured by plants prior to reaching the ground, resulting in less runoff. Less runoff means less potential for pollution flowing downstream into the lake.

Watershed-Friendly Native Landscaping Program Overview

Owners of properties that drain to Lake Whatcom qualify to participate in the HIP Watershed Friendly Native Landscaping Program. This program helps property owners convert areas of lawn and traditional landscaping into beautiful, low-maintenance native landscaping, including features such as wet gardens, mulch paths, dry creekbeds, and rainwater harvesting systems that provide water to newly installed native plants. These projects are an important part of our collective effort to improve water quality in Lake Whatcom.

HIP native landscaping areas have a thick mulch layer and a minimum density of plants common to forests of the Pacific Northwest. Native plants are generally defined as those found west of the Cascade Range prior to the arrival of European settlers. However, HIP allows flexibility allowing for reimbursement of all plants native to Washington State and their cultivars (plant variety produced in cultivation by selective breeding). In some cases, HIP staff can approve species from outside Washington if they are adapted to our region, non-invasive, and drought-tolerant. In the end, your landscaping is meant to be *like* a forest, but not *inside* a forest, so the plants you choose can be as unique as you are!



Program Assistance

The HIP Native Landscaping Program offers the following types of assistance:

- **Native Landscaping Design Assistance**—homeowners receive resources to learn how to design and install a native landscaping project plus a follow up site visit from a native plant expert for one-on-one assistance to develop a planting plan.
- **Permit Application Assistance**—homeowners receive assistance to complete a HIP project permit application.
- **Reimbursement for Approved Materials**—the reimbursement budget is \$2.00/square foot of improved area, with no maximum. For example, 1,000 square feet of native landscaped area = \$2,000 reimbursement budget. Reimbursement is available for the actual cost of approved materials including native plants, mulch, cardboard, and other materials necessary to complete a HIP approved project. If you choose to hire a landscape designer or a contractor to help with your project, those costs are also eligible for HIP funding. This document contains a reimbursement section below for more details.

Program Process

1. Homeowners visit www.lakewhatcomHIP.org, type in their address, and get directed to a page explaining they qualify for the Native Landscaping Program and inviting them to review program information and sign up for a site visit.
2. Homeowners review native landscaping videos and Native Landscaping Program Handbook and Appendices.
3. Homeowners schedule a site visit, or a series of on-site consultations, with a native plant expert to receive assistance measuring areas, selecting plants, finalizing their native landscaping plan, and completing their HIP application materials. **We encourage all eligible homeowners to sign up for a no-commitment site visit to discuss the potential for a HIP project on their unique property.**

4. Homeowners complete and submit a HIP native landscaping project application.
5. City staff reviews the HIP project application and issues a permit if the project meets HIP requirements. Often, permits are issued on the same day as the application is submitted.
6. Homeowners purchase materials and install their native landscaping improvements as described in their permitted plan, keeping all receipts. HIP Staff are available to help out at each step of the process.
7. Homeowners notify HIP staff that the project is complete and schedule a final inspection. During the final inspection, HIP staff will assist you with the reimbursement form and provide all the forms you need to maximize your reimbursement amount.
8. Homeowners complete and submit their reimbursement form and signed maintenance agreement, which qualifies the homeowner for future financial assistance for project upkeep.
9. Homeowners receive their reimbursement check through the mail, often 2-3 weeks after submittal. Except in very rare cases, reimbursement requests are processed and fully paid within one month of receipt.
10. Homeowners complete the maintenance activities described in the maintenance agreement and watch their new plants grow. HIP staff remains on-call to assist with ongoing project upkeep, including helping you expand your project area if you decide to do more landscaping than originally planned.

Program Requirements

- **Native Landscaping Project Requirements**—the native landscaping area installed through HIP must meet the project requirements described below.
- **Maintenance Agreement**—homeowners must sign a notarized maintenance agreement providing assurances that the native landscaping areas installed through HIP will be preserved and maintained. Providing a signed maintenance agreement qualifies the homeowner for future financial assistance for project upkeep, and allows the homeowner to self-inspect their project’s components and progress.

Watershed-Friendly Native Landscaping Project Requirements

All HIP native landscaping projects must meet the minimum requirements listed below in order to be eligible for HIP reimbursement.

1. **Planting Area Size** - The total planting area must reduce the size of the lawn on the property by at least 25%. For example, a homeowner with 1,000 square feet of lawn must mulch and plant at least 250 square feet to qualify for the \$2.00/square foot reimbursement pay out. HIP Staff

can help define the amount of lawn you already have, so you know your minimum size (and budget) before you even begin laying out planting areas.

2. **Mulch** - All planting areas must be covered by at least 4" of low-phosphorus mulch. On slopes, 6" of mulch is recommended. Mulch must be one of the approved low-phosphorus mulches available locally (see HIP Native Landscaping Materials Purchasing Guide Appendix D). Use the formula provided in the planting worksheet in Appendix E to calculate how many cubic yards of mulch you need to cover your area to a depth of 4" and round up to the next whole yard. If you prefer to use Excel, a spreadsheet is available at <https://www.lakewhatcomhip.org/resources-2/> that will calculate these numbers for you. It is good practice to spread mulch thicker than 4" when possible. Thicker mulch does a better job at preventing weed growth and will last longer before needing replenishment. There is no maximum amount of mulch.
3. **Vegetation Layers** - Each unique planting area must include two or three different vegetation layers (tree, shrub, or groundcover). Select one of four options from the planting worksheet (Appendix E):
 - A. Tree, Shrub, and Groundcover
 - B. Tree and Shrub
 - C. Tree and Groundcover
 - D. Shrub and Groundcover
4. **Minimum Planting Density** - Each planting area must include at least the minimum number of plants (planting density) specified for the vegetation layer option you select. Existing plants should be counted. It does not matter if your existing plants are native or not. Use the planting worksheet provided in Appendix E to calculate the minimum number of plants required for each planting area. If you prefer to use Excel, a spreadsheet is available at <https://www.lakewhatcomhip.org/resources-2/> that will calculate these numbers for you. There is no maximum number of plants.
5. **90% Native** - At least 90% of the new plants installed with your HIP project **should** be native to Washington State. Non-native plants are not reimbursable and may need to be replaced with native plants if they don't survive (per the maintenance agreement). Be cautious when shopping around - different nurseries and websites have different ways of defining native plants. To ensure you are selecting plants that meet HIP program requirements, please use one of the following approved sources to select plants:
 - **HIP Native Plant List** (Appendix C)
 - **King County Planting Plans** (Appendix C)

- **King County Native Plant Guide**—a user friendly, interactive website where you can browse plant photos, search for plants by canopy type or soil moisture conditions and more! <https://green2.kingCounty.gov/gonative/Index.aspx>
6. **10% Non-Native Allowance** – Up to 10% of the plants installed with your HIP project may be non-native to Washington State; however, non-native plants are not eligible for reimbursement. Native plant cultivars and two hybrid dogwood varieties-Venus Dogwood and Eddy’s White Wonder Dogwood- are eligible for reimbursement. These plants are noted on the HIP Native Plant list. If you’re not sure if a plant is eligible, ask a friendly HIP staff member.
 7. **Drought-Resistant Plant Special Provision** – With approval from HIP Staff, homeowners may be reimbursed for approved drought-tolerant plants that are not currently considered native to Washington State.
 8. **Purchasing Materials** – Use the HIP Native Landscaping Materials Purchasing Guide (Appendix D) to help you find local businesses that carry native plants, local native plant sales, and other HIP-approved supplies.
 9. **Protect Utilities** - No trees or shrubs should be planted within 5' of a known utility on private property or within 10' of a known utility in the public rights-of-way. HIP staff will assist you in calling 8-1-1 for a free utility locate prior to finalizing your planting plan and project details.
 10. **Protect Steep Slopes** – Planting areas should not be installed on a slope >35% without considerations of the impacts that might come from digging and planting on that steep slope. HIP staff can help you find a professional who can help determine if the slope is safe for planting. The cost of hiring such a professional can be reimbursable.

HIP Watershed-Friendly Native Landscaping Additional Features

In addition to basic native landscaping, you may decide to add additional features to your project.

Wet Gardens

A wet garden is a good solution for areas of your yard where wet soil and mud cause a maintenance problem. Low-lying areas where runoff may pool from time to time can be landscaped without the need for extensive digging or drainage features. Simply follow the native landscaping planting requirement and select plants that will thrive in wet conditions. Ask for recommendations of water-loving native plants during a site visit.

Dry Creekbeds

You can use HIP-approved round river rock to create pleasing dry creekbed features within your native landscaping area. HIP allows these features for visual appeal with the Native Landscaping Program. They are not intended to manage drainage or to act as formal walkways but can be used to add interesting features to your landscape.

Dry Creekbeds should be no more than two-feet wide. Think of them as ribbons of rock mulch running through your native landscaping. The rock areas do not need to be planted, but their area must be included as part of the HIP planting plan. Plants not installed in the dry creek bed area must be installed elsewhere on site to maintain compliance with HIP rules for minimum planting density.

Simply define the area for your creekbed feature, cover with cardboard, install edging as necessary, and place at least 4" of approved rock from the HIP Native Landscaping Material Purchasing Guide (Appendix D). No weed cloth please! It will create long-term maintenance problems. Weeds are easy to pull by hand.



Project Extras-Materials

If you still have reimbursement budget remaining after purchasing the materials for your native landscaping project (i.e., plants, mulch, rock, professional help), you can apply your remaining reimbursement funds to cover material costs for the following project extras.

Deer Protection

Deer can hamper the growth and establishment of new native plants. Typically, plants will recover from minor deer damage and grow large enough to outpace deer browsing. Plants need to be well established to recover. If you need to take action to protect your new native plants from deer, materials for temporary deer fencing or cages are eligible for reimbursement through HIP. Because these protections are intended to be temporary, you will be required to eventually remove the deer fencing or netting as part of your project's long-term maintenance plan.

Edging Materials

Edging materials may be used to keep your mulch in place and separate your native landscaping area from lawn or other landscaped areas. Edging materials are reimbursable through HIP and can be any type of material about 6-8" tall (something that extends high enough to be above the level of your mulch) that functions to hold mulch in place. There are many types of manufactured edging materials available for purchase at home improvement stores or get creative and repurpose logs, boards, or bricks.

Please note retaining walls are not reimbursable through HIP. To keep mulch in place on steeper slopes, simply use edging materials across the slope to hold back the mulch, essentially creating small, level terraces across the slope.



Half logs staked across a steep slope to hold new mulch in place.



Decking boards used as edging with temporary deer fence.

Rain Barrels

Your new plants will need to be watered for one to three summers until their roots become established and deep enough to withstand our dry season. If you install a rain barrel or cistern and use it to water your new native landscaping, your materials may be reimbursable through HIP. Check with HIP staff to confirm.



Rainwater harvesting system installed to water new native plants.

Hiring Help

Note: All businesses must be legally licensed to do business in Washington State and registered with the City of Bellingham finance office to provide reimbursable services.

The HIP provides free technical assistance to complete a project plan and application materials. The program also provides financial reimbursement for the cost of native landscaping materials, landscape design, and installation labor. Because material costs can use up a large amount of your reimbursement budget, many homeowners choose to install the landscaping themselves, following simplified designs and plant lists that do not require a professional designer. If you decide to hire help, here are some tips.

- Remember that, while the cost of installation labor may be reimbursable through HIP, the cost of labor will likely result in some out-of-pocket costs for you. Total reimbursement can not exceed your reimbursement budget of \$2.00 per square foot of your native landscaping project. For instance, if your budget is \$4,000 and you spend \$3,000 on materials and \$2,000 on labor, you will not be reimbursed for \$1,000 of the labor cost.
- You are responsible for providing instructions to anyone you hire to assist you with your HIP project to comply with HIP requirements. Once the HIP project plan is approved, homeowners are responsible for managing the project, unless they request help from HIP staff. Please share any applicable information in this binder and don't hesitate to invite HIP staff to any meetings with your contractor or designer.
- Some local professionals have been trained for HIP in 2017 and 2018, but HIP cannot guarantee their performance or workmanship. You are responsible for providing HIP program information, even when working with a HIP-certified professional. If you coordinate with HIP staff, they can help you in conversations with professionals. NOTE: HIP staff are not legally allowed to advise you on accepting bids or contracting with a private company. We cannot comment on cost estimates, other than to confirm that the work is HIP-eligible and reimbursable.
- Often the level of help needed to install a HIP project (i.e., spread mulch and dig holes) can be provided by a small business or sole proprietorship, such as a small landscape company or a general do-it-all laborer. In one local example, The Western Washington University student employment center is one way to find this type of assistance: <https://www.finaid.wvu.edu/studentjobs/employers/index.php>. HIP staff cannot guarantee the quality or cost of this type of labor.
- In general, companies that offer landscaping services have the skills required to help you install your project. Again, please share any applicable information in this binder.

Designing Your Native Landscaping Project

Use the information and resources provided online and during a site visit to design a native landscaping project that fits your property and your needs. Follow these basic steps to get started.

1. **Identify Planting Areas** - Use the Landscaping with Native Plants handbook (Appendix B) for guidance on evaluating your unique landscape and identifying areas where native landscaping is a good fit for your property. Look for areas of lawn to convert to native landscaping or areas of existing landscaping where you can add native plants and mulch. Areas at the base of slopes, where water would flow off your property, are another location to consider for native landscaping. Identify unique planting areas to convert to native landscaping on your property. A unique planting area has a different sun exposure or different vegetation layer combination than other planting areas.
2. **Identify Right-of-Way Planting Areas** - For most properties, some areas near property lines are actually located in the road or alley right-of-way. Rights-of-way usually extend beyond the visible edge of the road into the nearby front or side yards. Including the right-of-way area as part of your HIP plan is allowed and reimbursable if:
 - a. You already satisfy the minimum planting area size requirements on your property.
 - b. You receive written approval (in the form of an email) from the City (see sample email in the example application, Appendix E) that confirms no vital infrastructure is located in that right-of-way area
 - c. No trees can be planted in the right-of-way. Select vegetation layer option D Shrub and Groundcover Only.
 - d. Right-of-way planting is a part of your approved HIP permit application.

Please fill out a separate planting worksheet for landscaping in the right-of-way area.

3. **Measure Planting Areas** - Use the guidance provided in Measuring Areas for Your HIP Project in Appendix H to measure each planting area. Draw each area on your proposed improvements map and label each area in square feet.
4. **Select a Vegetation Layer Option & Calculate Minimum Plant Numbers** - For each vegetation layer option (A, B, C, or D) and the right of way (if applicable), complete a planting worksheet to calculate the minimum number of trees, shrubs, and groundcover plants required for that planting area. Existing plants —both native and non-native—count towards your total number. You are welcomed and encouraged to plant more than the minimum, especially groundcovers and perennials.
5. **Select Your Plants** – Here are suggestions to help you select plants that will work well for your planting area(s):
 - Use the King County planting plans (Appendix C) that match the conditions of your planting area (dry/most/wet soils; sunny/part shade/full shade sun exposure).
 - Take the HIP plant list (Appendix C) and visit local nurseries and demonstration sites listed in the HIP Native Landscaping Materials Purchasing Guide (Appendix D) to see what the plants look like and decide which ones you like.

- Ask for help selecting plants from the native plant expert at a site visit.
- Take a photo of your yard and show it to an expert at your local nursery. Remember to remind the nursery staff member that you must plant only Washington State native plants.
- Select plants that will provide a variety of heights, shapes, and bloom time that match the soil conditions and sun exposure for that planting area.
- Select groups of plants with similar water needs to avoid over or under watering plants.
- Be sure to include evergreen plants for year-round color and soil protection.
- Consider the mature plant size to ensure your new plant has the room it needs to grow.

Once you have decided which native plants you like that will grow well in your planting area(s), fill out the plant list on each planting worksheet.

Getting Help – Site Visits

HIP is partnering with the Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) to provide one-on-one assistance designing your native landscaping project and the help you need to develop a plan that you are happy with and will work for your unique site.

What to Expect

Site visits will last about two hours and consist of walking around your property, looking at your draft plan, sharing your ideas and needs for your native landscaping project, getting assistance selecting plants that are appropriate for the given location, and completing your plant list. You can get specific questions answered on plant selection, maintenance, care, and installation techniques. WCD staff can also provide assistance measuring areas, creating a proposed improvements map, and answer your questions about the HIP application paperwork.

Schedule a Visit

Contact Katharine Kiendl, Lake Whatcom HIP Coordinator at (360) 526-2381 x118 or kkiendl@whatcomcd.org

HIP Project Application and Permits

After you have completed your proposed improvement map showing the location for each of your planting areas and a planting worksheet for each vegetation layer option (A, B, C, or D) and the right of way (if applicable), you are ready to complete the rest of the HIP application forms.

See Appendix E for an example application packet and blank forms. HIP staff will provide you with custom property maps at your site visit. Draw on these maps to make the required maps for your application. See Appendix H for detailed instructions on how to measure areas for your maps.

City of Bellingham residents need to apply for a free stormwater permit to install their HIP native landscaping project. All materials needed for the permit application can be completed or assembled by HIP staff at or after your site visit. A full blank packet of all of these materials is found in Appendix E. The city prefers the documents in the order shown in the packet, as follows:

- Stormwater permit application (completed by homeowner, HIP staff, or designer)
- HIP Native Landscaping Project Application (completed by homeowner, HIP staff, or designer)
- Existing conditions map (or aerial photo, completed by staff or designer after or before site visit)
- Proposed improvements map (or aerial photo, completed by homeowner after site visit)
- Planting worksheets (one for each planting area)
- Written approval to plant in the City right-of-way (if applicable)
- City of Bellingham Director's Exemption / Erosion and Sediment Control Considerations and Conditional Plan for Projects Consisting of Lawn Removal (standard boilerplate, provided)

Permit questions and submittal:

Refer to the example City of Bellingham application provided in Appendix E when completing your HIP project application. Contact HIP staff listed below with City of Bellingham permit questions or to request permission to plant in the road right-of-way. Submit your application in person, by mail, or scan and email to the HIP staff listed below.

Eli Mackiewicz, Engineering Technician
City of Bellingham Public Works Natural Resources
104 W. Magnolia St., Suite 109
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 778-7742
emackiewicz@cob.org

Installing Your Native Landscaping - Project Phasing

You can install your HIP project in phases to make installation easier. Homeowners may also request reimbursement in multiple phases as long as a signed maintenance agreement is provided with the first reimbursement request. A typical phasing plan is to install the mulch in the summer as phase one then plant during the fall or spring planting windows as phase two. You could also divide your total planting area into two sections and complete one section at a time. Please notify HIP staff if you would like to phase your project and confirm your phasing plan.

Installation Steps

1. More detailed instructions are provided in Landscaping with Native Plants (Appendix B).
2. Locate your utilities to ensure you do not place large plants where their roots will damage water/sewer/gas lines, etc. Call 8-1-1 for a free utility locate within public rights-of-way as needed. Make sure you know where the utility lines run on your property.
3. Mark the boundaries or define the shape of your planting area.
4. Place cardboard over all flat areas, leaving existing lawn in place. Removing lawn disturbs the soil, is not a HIP permitted activity, and may trigger special Lake Whatcom watershed regulations. Cardboard and/or a thick layer of mulch will smother the grass without disturbing the soil. Cardboard is not required, but it will be especially helpful if the site is very weedy. Cardboard is not recommended on slopes. Remove tape from cardboard boxes before using. See tips below on where to find cardboard for your planting project.
5. Install mulch over cardboard or directly over lawn to a depth of 4" on flat areas and a depth of 6" on sloped areas. Thicker mulch will last longer and do a better job of smothering weeds.
6. Install irrigation system and rain barrels (optional).

7. Install plants by clearing away mulch and cutting through the cardboard to the native soil. Dig a hole as deep as the roots and twice as wide. Try to keep the mulch out of the planting hole. Planting techniques will vary depending on the type of plant (potted, bare root, plug). See Landscaping with Native Plants (Appendix C) for more detailed instructions on planting different types of nursery plants. Plants will do well in native soil. Adding soil amendments is not recommended or reimbursable. Please contact HIP staff for advice if you discover challenging soil conditions (e.g., clay) when planting.
8. Replace mulch to within 4"-6" of plant stems and trunks.
9. Install temporary deer fencing (optional).
10. Sweep all dirt and mulch off impervious surfaces like driveways, streets, or walkways.

Sources of Cardboard

HIP does not maintain a list of cardboard vendors or sources, but here are some tips on how find cardboard for your planting project.

- Ask businesses that sell products that come in large boxes if you can have cardboard from their recycle bin. Bicycle shops or appliance stores are two good places to ask.
- Use the search term "paper supplies Bellingham" or "packing supplies Bellingham" online to find local businesses that may sell bulk large boxes or rolls of cardboard.

Final Inspection & Reimbursement

Homeowners are responsible for purchasing HIP eligible materials for their project, keeping copies of their receipts, and submitting a reimbursement request form along with a notarized copy of the maintenance agreement after their final inspection.

Final Inspection

A final inspection (or phase one completion inspection) is required for reimbursement. During final inspection, HIP staff will verify that your native landscaping project was installed following (or in an attempt to follow) approved plans provided in your permit application and meets the minimum HIP requirements. HIP staff will provide a copy of the maintenance agreement ready for signature at the final inspection appointment and be available to help answer questions about the reimbursement request form. Contact Katharine Kiendl with the Whatcom Conservation District at (360) 526-2381 x118 or rocconor@whatcomcd.org to schedule your final inspection.

Reimbursement

The HIP Native Landscaping Program provides reimbursement for materials, supplies, and installation labor necessary to install new native landscaping. There is an upper limit to reimbursement calculated as \$2.00 per square foot of project area, but not a cap on how many square feet your project could include. Due to the reimbursement limit, it is possible that you will have some out-of-pocket expenses. See the HIP Native Landscaping Materials Purchasing Guide (Appendix D) for information on HIP approved native plants, mulch, and other materials. Be sure to keep copies of all receipts, and make sure that all receipts clearly describe the item purchased. For example, receipts should show the type of mulch purchased and plant names that correlate to one of the approved native plant lists. Purchase HIP project materials in a separate transaction from other non-HIP related items. If this is not possible, please cross off non-HIP eligible materials from the receipt and calculate new totals and sales tax paid for HIP items. A blank reimbursement request form is located in Appendix F.

The HIP Native Landscaping Program provides reimbursement for the following materials:

- All materials listed in the HIP Native Landscaping Materials Purchasing Guide (Appendix D)
- Native plants from the HIP plant list (Appendix C) or as defined in the Materials Purchasing Guide (Appendix D)
- Native plant cultivars and hybrid varieties Venus Dogwood and Eddy's White Wonder Dogwood
- Professional services – provided the service provider is a licensed business in the State of Washington and is registered to do business in Bellingham per local regulations.
- Cardboard

- Mulch from the City of Bellingham Approved Mulch for Use in the Lake Whatcom Watershed list (Appendix D)
- Delivery fees for project materials
- Debris disposal fees (e.g., fee to dispose of blackberry canes or weeds removed from your planting area)
- Hand tools and equipment deemed necessary to install the project
- Temporary deer fencing materials around new native planting area
- Edging materials
- Rain barrel materials and temporary irrigation supplies to water new native plants

Final Inspection and Reimbursement Process

1. Homeowner compiles receipts and follows directions provided above to schedule a final inspection.
2. HIP staff conducts final inspection to confirm that improvements meet HIP project requirements, provides a copy of the HIP Native Landscaping Maintenance Agreement ready for signature, and answers questions regarding the reimbursement form as needed.
3. Homeowner calculates total HIP-eligible material costs and completes the reimbursement request form with copies of receipts and a signed, notarized maintenance agreement attached. If requested, free notary services are available.
4. Homeowner submits reimbursement request to the City of Bellingham. Reimbursement requests can be scanned and emailed, dropped off in person Monday – Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., or make an appointment. Submit reimbursement request and maintenance agreement to:

Eli Mackiewicz, Engineering Technician
 City of Bellingham Public Works Natural Resources
 104 W. Magnolia St., Suite 109
 Bellingham, WA 98225
 (360) 778-7742
emackiewicz@cob.org

5. City staff process reimbursement requests as quickly as possible and homeowners receives their check within 3 - 4 weeks for eligible expenses at a reimbursement rate of \$2.00/square foot improved area.

Maintenance

Native landscaping is very easy to maintain; however, some maintenance is required in order to ensure that your new plants survive, and your native landscaping area continues to provide a water quality benefit. New plants will require watering and weeding. Mulch will need to be replenished approximately every five years to maintain a 4-inch depth. For more detail on how to care for your new native landscaping areas, see Landscaping with Native Plants (Appendix C) and the Maintenance Agreement for Water Quality Improvement Projects Through the Lake Whatcom Homeowner Incentive Program (Appendix G).

Noxious Weeds

In some instances, noxious weeds like blackberry or English ivy may invade your new native planting area. It is important to remove these weeds to protect your native landscape. For more information on noxious weeds, visit the Whatcom County Noxious Weed Program website at <http://whatcomcounty.us/914/Weeds>. Browse fact sheets and resources available on the website for assistance identifying and controlling noxious weeds on your property or contact weed program staff with questions.

Reporting and Inspection

As part of the maintenance agreement, HIP staff from the City of Bellingham or may ask homeowners to submit current photos of their native landscaping improvements in order to document that they remain intact and are being maintained or may ask homeowners for permission to check that HIP improvements are still intact as designed and installed.

Staff Contacts

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Appendices

Note that all appendices may be found on the HIP website at:

<https://lakewhatcomhip.org/resources-2/>

- A. Frequently Asked Questions
- B. Landscaping with Native Plants
- C. HIP Native Plant List & King County Planting Plans
- D. HIP Native Landscaping Materials Purchasing Guide
- E. HIP Application Examples & Blank Forms
- F. Reimbursement Request Form
- G. HIP Native Landscaping Maintenance Agreement
- H. Measuring Areas for your HIP Project