

City of Ceres

WATER EFFICIENT LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

Single Family Housing



Prepared by the Planning and Community Development Department
and Public Works Department – February 1994

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WATER EFFICIENT LANDSCAPES AND STANDARDS

Section 1.0: Purpose and Intent

The purpose of these Guidelines is to establish landscaping regulations that are intended to:

- A. Enhance the aesthetic appearance of development by providing standards relating to quality, quantity, and functional aspects of landscaping and landscape screening.
- B. Increase compatibility between various land uses, particularly between residential and abutting commercial and industrial land uses.
- C. Reduce the heat and glare generated by development.
- D. Reduce water consumption in the landscape environment using conservation principles. Comply with State laws requiring local agencies to adopt water-conserving landscape standards.
- E. Protect public health, safety, and welfare by minimizing the impact of all forms of physical and visual pollution, controlling soil erosion, screening incompatible land uses, preserving the integrity of neighborhoods, and enhancing pedestrian and vehicular traffic and safety.
- F. Provide developers and property owners with a better understanding of the City's expectations regarding the design and installation of landscaping and irrigation systems as currently required by Code.
- G. Establish a system to insure that the City's interests in landscaping and irrigation systems are carried out are both cost-effective and flexible. The City Council recognizes that minor deviations may be granted to these guidelines, whenever such deviations are more likely to satisfy the purpose and intent of the Guidelines.

Section 2.0: Applicability

Section 3.0 of these Guidelines shall apply to the development of a lot with single-family dwelling (including model homes) as permitted use where the Ceres Zoning Ordinance requires the landscaping of the front yard (front setback) and exterior side yard (side setback). Section 4.0 of these Guidelines shall apply to all development projects that consist of two or more dwelling units on a single lot or lots, or non-residential uses that are subject to the discretionary review and approval by the City of Ceres and where landscaping and irrigation systems are required by the Zoning Ordinance. Section 5.0, Definitions, and Appendix A apply to all developments regulated by these Guidelines.

Section 3.0: Single-family Lots

A landscaping and irrigation plan, meeting the standards and requirements of this section of these Guidelines, shall be prepared in conjunction with an application for a building permit for the construction of a single-family dwelling, including model homes, when located on a single lot. The landscaping and irrigation plan shall be submitted with the application for a building permit.

Using the City's pre-approved standard plan, a plan showing plant and irrigation detail, the plan calculation sheet a checklist and a list of exceptions need to be submitted. As long as the plan with the exceptions meets the intent of these regulations, no other information need be provided.

All landscaping is to be installed in accordance to the approved plans prior to final inspection. If the landscaping installed exceeds the water allocation of the approved plan, the building permit for the dwelling shall not be finalized until corrections have been made or a cashier's check is posted equal to the cost of making the corrections by an appropriately licensed contractor recognized by the State of California as competent to install landscaping.

The installation of landscaping on a single-family lot may be deferred for a period of not more than six (6) months after the final inspection has been issued by: (1) showing cause for deferring the installation of landscaping; and (2) posting with the City of Ceres a cashier's check in an amount equal to a licensed landscape contractor's estimate for the installation of the landscaping as a bond. A request to defer the installation of landscaping shall be made in writing to the Director of Public Works and shall authorize the City to use the funds deposited with the City to cause the landscaping to be installed consistent with the landscaping plans approved by the City.

Section 3.1 Landscape Design Policies for Single-family Lots

The following landscape design policies are intended to assist the landowner in understanding the City's expectations for landscaping required by the Ceres Zoning Ordinance for single-family lots.

- A. Landscaped areas should incorporate plantings utilizing a three tier system: (1) grasses and ground covers, including vines; (2) shrubs; and (3) trees.
- B. Planting masses on-site should assume a simple, non-uniform arrangement.
- C. Plants should be selected based upon their adaptability to the climate, geology, and topographic conditions of the site. The planting of trees is encouraged, especially deciduous trees planted on the south side of buildings.
- D. Plants having similar water needs should be grouped together in distinct "hydrozones" so that the irrigation system can efficiently provide adequate water supplies.

Section 3.2 General Landscape Requirements and Development Standards for Single-family Lots.

The following represent the minimum requirements and development standards for landscaping single-family lots in the City of Ceres.

A. Water Conservation

The design of the landscaping shall be based on the following method:

1. *Pre-approved City Standard Plans.* Pre-approved standard plans developed by the City that incorporates the appropriate mixture of plant materials and irrigation system components to meet the City's water conservation and landscaping objectives may be used. These standard plans and checklist are included in Appendix A.

B. Trees

1. Minimum tree size shall be fifteen (15) gallon unless another size is specified in certain situations. One tree shall be planted for each residential lot. Two trees shall be planted for each corner lot. One in the front yard (front yard setback) and one in the exterior side yard (side yard setback).
2. Trees shall be staked and planted in accordance with city standards.
3. Tree varieties shall be long-lived (minimum of 50 years), clean, require little maintenance and be structurally strong and disease and pest resistant.
4. Trees planted in turf areas should be provided with a three-foot (3') diameter clear area around the trunk.
5. Trees planted adjacent to streets, parking areas and pedestrian walkways shall have a deep rather than shallow root system and be coordinated with any street trees located within the right-of-way.

C. Ground Cover/Turf

1. The size and spacing of plants used for ground cover shall be based on the requirements for the specific plants to achieve 100 percent coverage within three years from being planted.
2. Drought tolerant grasses should be planted in turf areas unless specific conditions prevent the selection of these species.

3. Turf must be installed in front area between the driveway and the property line providing the irrigation system is designed to minimize overspray. Sprinkler head radius in relation to turf width will be verified in Landscape Approval process.
4. Turf is not recommended for berms and other areas with slopes in excess of 20%. The toe of turf-planted berms or sloped areas (greater than 5%) shall be located a minimum of 24 inches behind any hardscape (curb, sidewalk, driveway, or walkway).
5. Turf shall not be installed within 24 inches of driveways or sidewalks unless a three-inch (3") deep swale, measured from the top of the hardscape, is constructed at least three feet (3") back of the hardscape.
6. Turf or **densely-planted, fast-growing walk-on groundcover** will be the options available for the area between the sidewalk and curb. Groundcover selection and planting density will be verified in the Landscape Approval process.

D. Rock-Stone and Mulch

1. A minimum of three inches (3") of rock, gravel, or mulch (e.g. wood chips, bark, etc) shall be required in conjunction with ground covers, shrubs and trees, provided that it does not become the dominant feature of the landscape program except for the few months after initial planting. Non-porous material such as impervious sheet plastic may not be placed under the mulch as it blocks the infiltration of rainwater and can cause runoff elsewhere on the site.
2. Inorganic materials such as rocks, stones, boulders and timbers may be incorporated into a landscape program only when used in conjunction with live plant materials and when limited to an accent feature.

E. Planters

1. All planter areas should provide positive drainage away from paved areas.
2. Planters should be separated from surrounding areas by a four inch (4") high curb of raised concrete or treated wood, or be recessed at least two (2") below the surrounding surface with a 4:1 slope away from any adjoining paved area.
3. All planters constructed adjacent to buildings or structures shall drain away from the building or structure.

F. Irrigation Systems

1. All landscaped areas shall be provided with an approved automatic irrigation system that meets the criteria listed below:
 - Low pressure/low precipitation rate systems (e.g. drip irrigation, etc.) shall be used where high pressure/high precipitation systems are not required and a low pressure system can provide an adequate supply of water.
 - Sprinkler heads irrigating turf or other high-water-demand landscape areas shall be circuited so that they are on a separate zone or zones from those irrigating trees, shrubbery or other reduced-water requirement areas.
 - **The system shall be designed to minimize overspray** onto impervious surfaces such as sidewalks, buildings, parking areas, etc. through the use of such techniques as low-trajectory spray nozzles or underground or low-volume applicators.
 - Sprinklers should not be installed immediately adjacent to sidewalks and other impervious areas but should be set inward in turf areas and other planting areas.
 - Automatic irrigation controllers shall have multiple cycle capabilities; electronic controllers shall have a battery backup.
 - Automatic irrigation controllers shall be programmed consistent with the days and hours established by the Water Conservation Program adopted by the City of Ceres.
 - Serviceable check valves are required where elevation differences may cause low head drainage.

Section 3.3: Specific Landscape Requirement and Development Standards Single-family Lots.

- A. Yards, Setbacks and Open Spaces. All front yards (front setbacks) and exterior sideyards (side setbacks) not otherwise devoted to driveways or walkways shall be landscaped in accordance with the minimum standards described below. Landscaping along street frontages shall be extended into the right-of-way and/or public utility easement to the sidewalk. Parkway strips, if any, shall also be landscaped with either turf (See Section 3.2, C) or a walk-on type of groundcover (See approved list in Appendix B). Street trees shall be consistent with the Ceres Street Tree Program.