



## Understanding Edgewater's New Landscaping Code

### Background

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 the Edgewater City Council unanimously adopted Ordinance No. 23-12 adopting a new article 34 of Chapter 16 of the Edgewater Municipal Code to impose Water Efficient Landscaping Requirements on New Development and Certain Development Projects. The new landscape regulations apply to residential, commercial, and institutional development projects in Edgewater. The regulations are intended to enhance Edgewater's environmental, economic, recreational, and aesthetic resources by promoting the efficient use of water in Edgewater's public and private landscapes, reducing water waste, and establishing procedures for the design, installation, and maintenance of water efficient landscape and irrigation systems. The new ordinance applies to landscape plans approved after January 1, 2024.

This guide provides a brief overview of Edgewater's new Water Efficient Landscape Requirements. It is intended as a summary of the code for Edgewater homeowners, developers, contractors, and landscapers, particularly those undertaking a major renovation project that would result in the need to install new landscaping in compliance with the Water Efficient Landscaping Requirements. **It is not intended to replace the thorough review of Edgewater Municipal Code Chapter 16-34.**

### Applicability

The landscape code applies to the following types of residential projects:

- All new construction of a primary structure
- Replacement or remodeling of a primary structure resulting in more than 500 square feet of additional gross floor area
- Construction of new streetscapes and rights of way (e.g., parking strip)

The landscape plan requirements **do not apply** to modifications by a property owner or homeowner's association to existing landscaping only.

Sample property modifications for code compliance	Code compliance required?
No changes are made to a given property.	No.
Homeowner replaces all front and backyard landscaping.	No.
Homeowner adds an uncovered porch.	No.
Homeowner adds a small garage or shed, expanding gross floor area by 250 sq ft.	No.
Homeowner expands gross floor area by more than 500 sq ft.	Yes.
The primary building on a property is demolished and rebuilt.	Yes.
A new single- or multi-family home is built on an empty lot.	Yes.

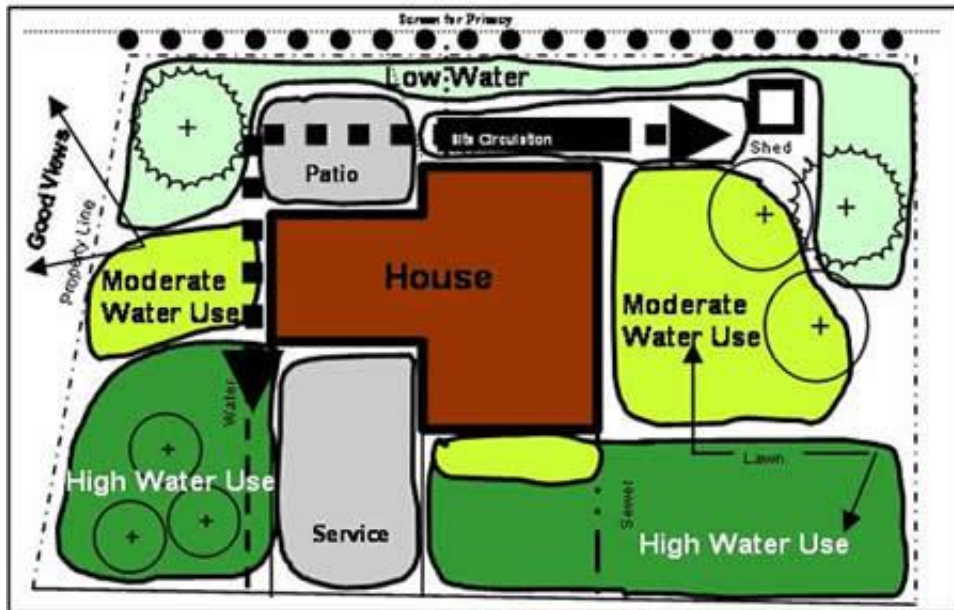
See Section 16-34-20

### Plant Material Standards

The following plant material requirements apply to applicable single-family and two-family residential properties:

- **General Plant material standards.** Specifications and guidance on the quality, spacing, minimum sizing, and proper installation of selected plant materials.
- **Hydrozones.** Requirement for plants to be planted – or hydrozoned – next to plants with similar water requirement. For example, in order to irrigate efficiently, low water use plants should not be planted in a moderate to high hydrozone. See Image A below.
- **Living Plant Material Coverage.** At maturity, the landscape must contain a certain percentage of living plant material, excluding tree canopies. The remaining areas may be covered by non-living organic or inorganic mulch, pavers, or other design features.
  - Front yard: 65% living plants coverage
  - Backyard: 50% living plant coverage
  - Side yard: No living plant material required
- **Cool Season Turfgrass.** Cool season turfgrass, such as Kentucky Bluegrass, ryegrass, fine fescue, and tall fescue, is a high water demand plant and shall be limited to the following areas:
  - No more than 25% of the total landscaped area.
  - Not permitted in landscaped areas less than 8 feet wide.
  - Not permitted on slopes greater than 25%.
- **Preferred Turf Species.** Native and adapted turfgrass varieties are encouraged.
- **Water Wise Plant Material Minimums.** At least 25% of the total landscaped area must be planted with non-irrigated, very low, or low water use plants.
- **Tree Minimums.** One tree must be planted for every two-thousand square feet of lot area not covered by a building or required parking.

- **Prohibited Plants.** Certain trees and plants – including those listed as an invasive species by Colorado State University or a Noxious Weed by Jefferson County – may not be installed as landscaping.



*Graphic A: Example of hydrozones on a property. Courtesy of Resource*

*See Section 16-34-40 and Section 16-34-30.*

## Non-Living Landscape Material Requirements

- **Soil Amendment.** Soil must be amended with a minimum of 4 cubic yards of organic matter soil amendment per 1,000 square feet of landscaped area, tilled to a depth of no less than 6 feet. Common organic soil amendments include compost, sphagnum peat, wood chips, grass clippings, straw, and manure.
- **Mulch.** Organic mulch which includes bark and wood chips is the preferred mulch treatment around plant material and should be applied to a depth of 4 inches (1 cubic yard per 80 square feet). Inorganic mulch which includes rock, gravel and cobble shall have a minimum depth of 2 inches.
- **Artificial Landscape Materials.** Artificial turf, trees, and shrubs are prohibited.
- **Landscape Fabric.** landscape Fabric is allowed underneath mulch to prevent weeds but plastic is not allowed.
- **Water Features.** Water Features must recirculate water, have wind shut-off devices, and be designed to reduce evaporation.

*See Section 16-34-40 and Section 16-34-30.*

## Right-of-Way Landscaping Standards

For residential properties, right-of-way landscaping refers to landscaping requirements in curbside landscapes and in the area closest to the street in a front yard.

- **Plant Material Requirements.** A minimum living plant material coverage of 50% of the curbside landscape area is required at maturity, excluding tree canopies. Plant materials shall be selected to accommodate environmental conditions such as heat, salt, pollution, pet waste, and snow removal.
- **Cool Season Turfgrass.** Cool season turf and overhead irrigation is not permitted in curbside landscapes.
- **Street Tree Requirements.** A minimum of 1 deciduous tree must be planted for every 40 linear feet of landscaped area within ROW, when possible. 75% of street trees shall be large canopy deciduous and these trees must be in a landscape area that is at least 6 feet wide. Code specifies required street tree spacing and location including distances from street curbs, intersections and street corner, buildings, and other trees.
- **Street Tree Selections.** Street trees must be selected from the City's Permitted Tree Species list (Section 11-4-40). All other trees may only be planted as City Trees if given written permission by the Tree Commission.

*See Section 16-34-80 and Section 11-4-40*

## Application & Inspection Requirements

- **Landscape Design.** Applicants shall submit a landscape design plan to Edgewater's Community Development Department as part of their application for a new or amended site development plan or right-of-way excavation permit. Applicants for single-family or two-family properties may complete their own (DIY) landscape design plans or hire a landscape contractor or landscape architect to complete the plan on their behalf. The landscape design plan shall include the following elements:
  - Project information sheet
  - Landscape architect and/or contractor contact information (if applicable)
  - A scaled plan including all major features of the property (e.g., property lines, city right of way, street names, existing and proposed structures)
  - Plant material calculations
  - Delineated and labeled hydrozones
  - Proposed plants
  - Location, type and depth of mulch and soil amendments
  - Location and type of any water features, pools or hot tubs.
  - Any existing trees or plants
  - Any stormwater management areas (such as rain gardens, bioswales, or permeable pavers)
- **Installation.** Once a landscape design plan has been approved by the Community Development Department, the homeowner may proceed with installing the landscape.

- **Inspection.** Once installed, all landscaping will be initially inspected by the City for compliance with the approved landscape plan. The City may elect to periodically inspect the landscaping to ensure ongoing compliance.
- **Seasonal Application Requirements.** Landscape inspections will not be performed between November 1<sup>st</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup>. If a landscape design plan is submitted between these dates, a landscape collateral agreement will be issued, and the applicant shall provide collateral to the City in cash. This deposit will be returned if the associated landscaping is installed, and an inspection is passed prior to July 15<sup>th</sup> of the next irrigation season.
- **Violations.** It is a violation of this Code for any person to fail to comply with the requirements of this Article. Violators may be cited in Municipal Court and, upon conviction, subject to the penalties set forth in Code Sec. 1-4-20.

*See Section 16-34-100 and Section 16-34-110*

## Landscape Maintenance

All properties in the City must keep all landscaping in a well-maintained and healthy growing condition. This includes:

- Watering, fertilizing, weeding, cleaning mowing, mulching, pruning or other maintenance, as needed.
- Mowing cool season grass to a preferred height of 3.5 inches to promote root growth and reduce water demand.
- Removing trash, weeds, and dead and dying plants.
- Replenishing mulch, as needed.
- Monitoring and periodically adjusting or repairing irrigation system components.

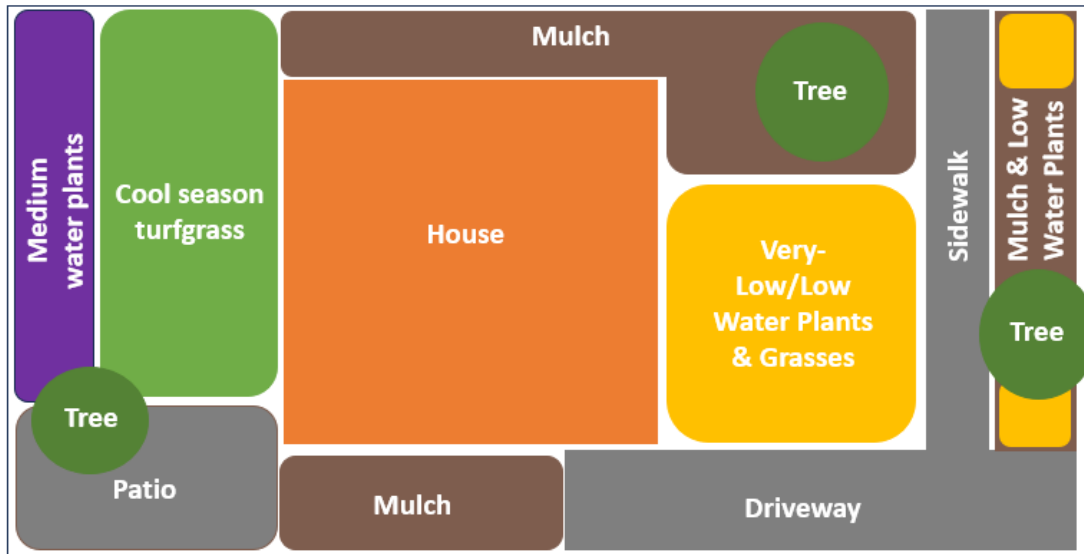
*See Section 16-34-130*

## Contact:

City of Edgewater  
Community Development Department  
1800 Harlan St  
Edgewater, CO 80214

Jocelyn Mills  
Community Development Director & Deputy City Manager  
(720) 763-3053  
[JMills@EdgewaterCO.com](mailto:JMills@EdgewaterCO.com)

## Sample Compliant Residential Landscape:



Lot size	6,000 square feet
Home & driveway area	2,000 square feet
Landscape area	4,000 square feet
Allowable cool season turf (25%)	1,000 square feet maximum
Required low water use plants (25%)	1,000 square feet minimum
Total required living plant material (65% front yard, 50% backyard, 0% sideyard)	1,975 square feet minimum (~2,500 square feet in Graphic B)
Required trees (1 per 2,000 sq ft of landscape area & 1 per 40 linear feet in ROW)	2 trees in yard, 1 tree in ROW

Graphic B: Sample residential and ROW landscape schematic aligned with code requirements.