

GROWING FRIENDS OF HELENA GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

(As amended 6/14/2007)

Introduction

The purpose of Growing Friends (GF) is to enrich the quality of life in the Helena, Montana, area with extensive plantings of suitable, attractive, diverse, and well-cared-for trees and shrubs. Among the organization's long term goals are to have trees and shrubs:

1. prominently adding to the character and appearance of every residential and commercial neighborhood;
2. significantly enriching every new commercial and institutional development; and
3. noticeably enhancing local government properties so that they set a standard for the community.

GF works to achieve its goals by funding and conducting planting projects, by educating the public and decision-makers, and by encouraging local governments.

Planting Project Criteria

In choosing which planting projects to become involved in, and (or) to make grants for, GF assigns the highest priority to projects which best satisfy the following criteria:

The project:

- a. must provide significant public benefits and only incidental private ones.
- b. is unlikely to be conducted without GF's involvement.
- c. helps GF to achieve a desirable diversity among its projects.
- d. has education or demonstration value.

The location:

- e. must be one through or by which significant numbers of Helena area residents regularly pass.
- f. currently lacks adequate and sufficient trees and shrubs.
- g. is one to which Helena area residents have access, and which is visible to the public.

The planting:

- h. is conducted in accordance with a landscaping plan.

- i. includes primarily trees, or a mixture of trees and shrubs if called for by the landscaping plan.
- j. uses plants (preferably native species) and techniques appropriate to Helena's climate and conditions.
- k. will be aesthetically pleasing and increase the attractiveness of its area.
- l. includes an irrigation system, or has a long-term watering plan.
- m. will be adequately maintained and relatively long-lived.

Specific Requirements for Grants

GF grants are usually for amounts up to \$2,000 (and occasionally more). In considering requests for grants, the following additional criteria are applied:

- n. The proposal asks for assistance from GF that is feasible, given its resources.
- o. The project's expenditures, including the prices to be paid for plants and materials, are reasonable.
- p. The property owner (note: throughout these guidelines the term "property owner" is used to mean either the owner of the property or the proponents of the project) is able to meet GF's requirements for cost sharing.

Regarding cost-sharing, GF expects the property owner to share in the effort and expense of a project. GF recognizes four categories of costs, which it will pay different portions of:

GF will pay up to 75% of the cost of: plants (trees and shrubs); planting labor; and planting materials (stakes, mulch, compost, and tree protectors). Please note: at least one-half of every GF grant must be spent on plants, planting labor, and planting materials.

GF will pay up to 50% of the cost of: irrigation systems.

GF will pay up to 25% of the cost of: landscaping plans.

GF will pay no portion of the cost of: activities conducted prior to GF's approval of its involvement in the project (except for landscaping plan development); equipment; grass or sod; maintenance after the planting is completed; or activities to be conducted in a subsequent phase of the project.

A property owner's matching share of a project's costs must be met with cash expenditures. For the purpose of determining how much plants or materials have cost, an invoice discount will be considered to be a price reduction, not a matching donation.

GF usually does not pay out its grant until the project, or the phase of the project in which GF is involved, has been completed. GF asks the property owner to submit copies of invoices that document the amounts of all allowable costs. If the cost-sharing requirements, and any other conditions, have been met, GF will either pay the project's vendor(s) directly, or reimburse the

property owner if the vendor(s) have already been paid. Requests for payment must be submitted to GF within 90 days of completion of the planting.

If a grant-supported project is not completed during the calendar year in which the grant is approved, the unearned portion of the grant will automatically lapse, unless a different termination date is specifically authorized. A request may be made to extend the deadline, or a new application for the project may be submitted in a subsequent year.

Note: Requests for variations from one or more of these specific requirements can be requested in special situations.

Decision-Making Schedule and Process

GF will consider requests for grants at any time, but plantings are best conducted in the spring or the fall.

The GF grant-making process generally includes the following steps:

1. A property owner makes an initial inquiry by writing to GF, or by contacting a member of the GF board. Such inquiries are usually referred to GF's Grant Committee.
2. A member of the Grant Committee talks with the property owner about the project and GF's requirements, and gives the property owner a copy of these guidelines.
3. The property owner submits a written proposal to GF describing the project and specifically identifying the assistance being sought from GF, using GF's Grant Program application form. A landscaping plan for the property should be submitted with the proposal.
4. One or more members of the Grant Committee make a visit to the project site with the property owner to gather more information about the project.
5. The Grant Committee discusses the proposal and makes a recommendation to the board.
6. The GF board discusses the proposal and makes a decision. In nearly all cases, the recommendation of the Grant Committee is taken.

The decision-making process normally takes six to eight weeks to complete, although the schedule can be expedited.

For more information or a Grant Application form, write to Growing Friends, P.O. Box 709, Helena, MT 59624 or contact the chair of Grant Committee: Nancy Nicholson, 443-5761, nenicholson@gmail.com