

GROWING FRIENDS OF HELENA GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES (As amended 10/3/2014)

Introduction

The purpose of Growing Friends (GF) is to enrich the quality of public space in the Helena area with extensive plantings of suitable, attractive, diverse, and well-cared-for trees and shrubs. We support the planting of trees and shrubs that:

- 1. add to the character and appearance of every residential and commercial neighborhood;**
- 2. meet or exceed the minimum landscaping requirements for new commercial and institutional development; and**
- 3. enhance 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 offer grants, GF uses the following criteria:

The project:

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

The location:

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

The planting should:

- h. be conducted in accordance with a landscaping plan.**

- i. include primarily trees, or a mixture of trees and shrubs if called for by the landscaping plan.
- j. use 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
- m. will be adequately maintained and relatively long-lived.

Terms of the Grants

GF grants are usually for amounts up to \$3,000 (and occasionally more). In considering requests for grants, the following additional criteria are applied:

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

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 up to 50% of the following:

- 1) plants (trees and shrubs);
- 2) planting labor; and planting materials (stakes, mulch, compost, and tree protectors).
- 3) irrigation systems.
- 4) 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 will talk with the property owner about the project and GF's requirements and refer the property owner to the grant guidelines and application form posted on our website, growingfriends.org.
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 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.
7. The grant applicant will be notified in writing of the decision of the board.

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



