

Summarized Survey Results

Survey Stats

- Start Date: 8/20/22
- End Date: 9/11/22
- # Of responses: 929
- # Of comments: 5,878

Question 1. What's your position toward increasing xeriscape policies, such as those listed above, in Fort Collins?

Results:

Value	Percent	Responses
Very opposed	4.3%	40
Opposed	3.1%	29
Neutral	3.8%	35
Supportive	17.7%	164
Very supportive	71.2%	661

Totals: 929

Comments Summary:

Most respondents understand water is a limited resource and most of the people also want to see change in landscapes to reflect the local climate. A common reoccurrence in the comments was that the process to have xeriscaped landscapes should be easy to understand and affordable. Some people mentioned how unmaintained xeriscape landscapes are very unattractive, though a few people mentioned that bluegrass lawns can also be unattractive if not well-maintained. People noted their love for the trees and stressed importance of prioritizing their health. For the most part, people disliked the amount of bluegrass seen around town and would prefer to see xeriscape measures that benefits pollinators, increases biodiversity, decreases water demand, and better reflects our local climate

Key Comments:

1. Landscape planning should support our water use and climate future goals.
2. I support water conservation methods through adequate soil amendments and xeric landscaping. The city will need a system that is user-friendly for contractors. Currently, the approval process is too cumbersome and leads homeowners to keep installing turf grass.

3. As a landscaper, I see disproportionate resource use in the wealthiest neighborhoods. Getting their HOAs to adopt climate friendly landscape guidelines should be a priority. Daily watering of bluegrass has got to stop.
4. Some of the xeriscape residential properties in the city look like overgrown weed gardens. People who are required to xeriscape are not likely to do it and maintain it well.
5. If done incorrectly people will neglect watering trees. We are losing lots of trees to drought. So sad to see loss of even newly planted trees.
6. I am a tenant who has to pay for lawn landscaping and has no control over my landlord's landscaping choices. Xeriscape policies would save water, help with beautification, and reduce my costs as a tenant.
7. Supportive if training comes along for landscaping crews too. Planting more and more xeriscape is only helpful and beautiful like the pic above when the landscape is maintained.

Question 2. Do you think xeriscape policy should expand to include new home (residential) construction?

Results:

Value		Percent	Responses
Yes, xeriscape policy should affect new residential and commercial construction the same		62.6%	582
Yes, xeriscape policy should affect new residential construction, but not to the same extent as commercial construction		26.0%	242
No, xeriscape policy should not affect new residential construction, only commercial construction		3.6%	33
No, I don't support xeriscape policies for any new construction		5.1%	47
Unsure		2.7%	25

Totals: 929

Comments Summary:

People are concerned about our water future and are mixed in how far they think govt. should get involved in homeowner choice and independence. Many sighted incentivization as the right approach, while some sighted the need for heavy regulation now due to drought and climate emergency. Many note the difference in use as a reason why res/biz should be subject to different policy, however, others disregard use difference in preference of policy equality. HOA tracts of turf often sighted more as biz than as res. Also, HOA rules not allowing Xeriscape often sighted (so policy change would be needed to enable people living in these areas to go X). Less

empathy for biz apparent, and many perceived less need for turf at biz. Many note that just because grass was the approach historically, doesn't mean it is the right approach now. It is a different time, climate change is a thing, and water has grown scarce. Many recognized the difficulty and long-term nature of managing change for this work, and a common and fairly neutral stance was that if we begin now by gently implementing policy with education and incentives, we can avoid retrofitting later and be moving in the right direction, while starting us down a path that is needed for our semiarid environment with its expected climate trends

Key Comments:

1. Sustainable landscaping should be encouraged but homeowners should still be allowed a fair amount of choice in the matter. I plan to xeriscape much of my property but if I still had children at home, I would want more lawn space for them to play in.
2. Xeriscaping can be a burden on families without the means to implement it. The city should be leading by example, building out new xeriscaped spaces and developing the competencies to better inform private citizens about the benefits. With more experience, will come a city that is more trusted and followed by private citizens without the need for heavy handed regulations.
3. Allow more creative freedom for homeowners, rather than requiring a very specific landscape plan. Provide clear boundaries and limits for homeowners to work within and that are easy to understand (and therefore enforce)
4. Xeriscape in spaces not intended for use by people (essentially non-yards/parks) should be an expectation given the water consumption required for traditional lawn.
5. Would hate to buy a new house and have someone tell me how to landscape my yard, it probably would already be pretty expensive to buy a house and then probably really expensive to hire a landscaper to properly xeriscape my yard.
6. This would be a big shift for residents, so allowing a bit less stringent guidelines for residences might be a good compromise

Question 3. If future xeriscape policies are put in place, should existing homes be subject to those policies in the event of a landscape renovation?

Results:

Value	Percent	Responses
Yes, existing homes should be held to xeriscape policies when renovating landscapes	43.0%	399
Yes, existing homes should be held to xeriscape policies when renovating landscapes, but not to the same extent as new homes	33.2%	308
No, xeriscape policy should not affect existing homes	16.8%	156
Unsure	7.0%	65

Totals: 928

Comments Summary:

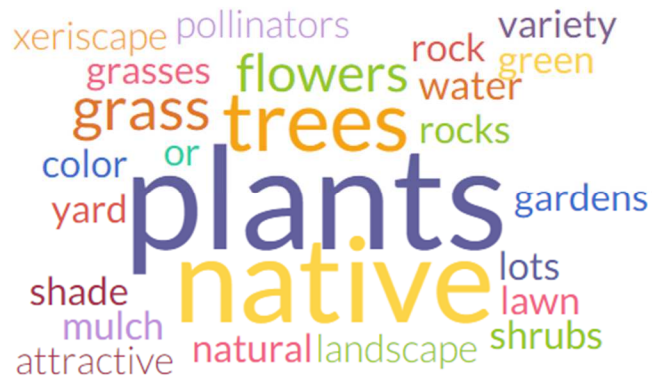
Everyone should have a role/play a part in water conservation. However, renovations are expensive and should not be required/regulated, for equity reasons. Do not have policy that increases cost. Education is key to successful renovation, especially to protect trees that are used to getting the water. People should have a choice, and not forced to go xeriscape, and equity should be considered. Additional red tape would be bad, and enforcement will be a huge challenge as well. However, if they CHOOSE to renovate, have standards that lean towards Xeriscape, such as: rules not allowing lawn expansion; incentivizing xeriscape; not allowing xeriscape conversion to lawn; total renovations subject to "new" home rules. Misconception- will this impact backyards. How to encourage HOAs to be more flexible or remove large tracts?

Key Comments:

1. I would fully agree with this except I'm concerned that this would make more red tape/permitting requirements and would actually result in preventing people from xeriscaping
2. As long as the guidelines are flexible and forgiving, sure. No one wants to see a sea of bluegrass with a weeping willow in our climate. But we want to be partners, not the enemy. Renovating landscaping is expensive. We shouldn't make it more expensive.
3. Let's not make it punitive, but rather participatory and community oriented. Let's help people change.
4. I would need help and support on converting a portion of my home landscaping to Xeriscape and I wouldn't want it to cost an exorbitant amount of money... Maybe if additional incentives for reducing water usage would off set the cost of converting I would be more inclined to do so
5. If there are no community funds available to homeowners to make the transition, more steps to ensure an equitable transition need to be taken.
6. Landscape renovations are expensive. Further, most of those landscapes will also have mature trees to deal with - making these conversions problematic (at least if you don't want to harm the trees).

Question 4. When you think of an attractive landscape at a home in Fort Collins, what does it look like?

Results:



Comments Summary:

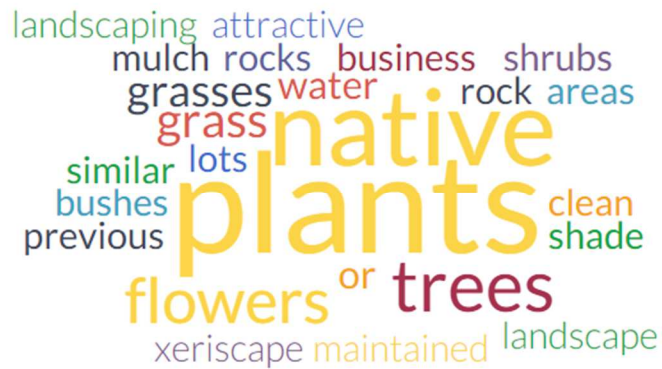
Most people who responded want to see diversity and variety. Native plants, pollinator friendly plants, perennials, shrubs, flowers, trees, mulch, rock, grasses were ALL mentioned frequently. Only a handful (<10) only wanted to see green grass, and a few respondents mentioned they prefer green grass but are trying to change their view. A common response was well-maintained, but there were also a lot of responses that preferred "wild" and "messy" landscapes. Native and drought-tolerant showed up frequently. Same with trees and shade. Also - a frequent response was that of an edible landscape! People want to see more fruit trees and edible plants around in front yards. A slightly less common response, but still notable, was that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and what's important is that the homeowner is happy. Backyard turf was much more encouraged than front lawns, and people wanted these areas to be functional. Functional, well-maintained, diverse, drought-tolerant, native, habitat for pollinators were the largest groupings.

Key Comments:

1. Diverse native gardens with turf areas that will be frequently used. These turf areas could include native or drought resistant turf types. Trees!
2. It is a landscape that is diverse and thriving within its limitations. It is a landscape of rocks, shrubs, wood, different plants, moss, flowers, etc. It is unique, and does not match the landscape next to it.
3. Neat, organized, and well maintained.
4. Whatever the owner wants it to be within reasonable expectations of resource usage.
5. Mix of plants, often including a small turf grass area where the eye "rests" from the busyness of the other plants.
6. Lots of flowers, drought tolerant plants, color, bees, a tree for birds/squirrels, etc. Basically, it would be its own ecosystem.

Question 5. When you think of an attractive landscape while entering a business in Fort Collins, what does it look like?

Results:



Comments Summary:

Most respondents want to see well-maintained, diverse, clean, and safe landscapes for businesses. There were quite a few comments about supporting businesses that had a more water conscious/xeric landscape as it showed the business cared about the community. People want to see various colors, textures, and a landscape that can be aesthetic all four seasons. Well-maintained, but easy maintenance, were prevalent responses - something that looks neat and clean but is not too much work. Functionality was big too, hardscape walkways up to the entrance, seating, and visibly clear with no obstructions in the parking lot for safety reasons. A few people commented, like residential, it is up to the property owner to decide. Some folks also mentioned how they don't care/don't notice the landscape of businesses.

Key Comments:

1. A bit more structured with tall grasses and colorful flowers. Large boulders for benches and bordering shrubs and perennials.
2. Functional space - possible seating and pathways, repetition in plantings creating movement in the space, minimal irrigated turf, interest from focal points like sculptures, boulders, etc.
3. Native xeriscaping makes me more appreciative of that business in that it looks that they are taking an active role in minimizing water usage.
4. Native plants in clusters or patterns, including grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees, with the use of pea gravel or mulch. For the most part, there is no need for a business to have turf anywhere.
5. Neat and no large plants blocking the way. Easy navigate when walking or driving through.
6. Not much grass. Neat and clean. Well maintained is important - if there are a lot of weeds, I think poorly of them (fairly or not!). Again, large expenses of gravel or loose rock are sloppy, unattractive, and hot.

Question 6. Which of the following best represents your view on the use of bluegrass in your neighborhood?

Results:

Value	Percent	Responses
It's important for me to have lots of bluegrass where I live	6.7%	62
I would be okay with some limits on bluegrass where I live	36.6%	338
I would be okay with no bluegrass where I live	38.2%	353
I would be okay with no bluegrass where I live, only if a park was within walking distance	14.1%	130
Unsure	4.4%	41

Totals: 924

Comments Summary:

Most respondents believe that bluegrass can be appropriate when it is functional (i.e., children, dogs, recreation) but many stated the current amount of grass is excessive. There were a notable number of comments saying that the government should not tell residents what to do with their own property. Of these comments, some stated people can do what they like on their property, whereas some added reducing grass and saving water is important but should still be the homeowner’s choice. On the flip side, most comments stated there needs to be change to the current amount of grass around town, some suggested starting with City and commercial properties. Once again, a common theme from these comments is that education is going to be key for success. Education on the importance of saving water through landscapes, alternatives to Kentucky Bluegrass (natives or DogTuff), and education to new homeowners of the Colorado climate and what might grow best. Whatever solution we land on, trees in bluegrass areas currently use to a lot of water, so it needs to be a priority to keep them healthy.



Key Comments:

1. People don't need lawns when they are near a park that can be used for recreational lawn activities. We are in a drought and don't need to waste water on something as non-functional and harmful as non-native turf grass. Every drop counts
2. Although bluegrass is water thirsty, it's resilient to browning up in the hot summer, and coming back in the fall. I'm worried people will turn to turf which is toxic for humans and is bad for our watershed. At least bluegrass pulls carbon from the air. Yes, limit some bluegrass, especially for front yards, green belts, etc.
3. For landscaping in non-yard areas there is an opportunity for more xeriscape. Especially certain HOA areas, but HOA members understandably can be reluctant to put effort in or HOA money into changing grassy areas that aren't being used
4. There should be an effort to get rid of Kentucky blue grass and change to a more sustainable grass. Again, the city will have to help as the costs will be prohibitive to most.

5. I'm ok with less blue grass if the decision is left to the property owners, rather than government.
6. I think bluegrass is essential for some activities, especially for children and pets. However the amount used currently is excessive.

Question 7. Which of the following best represents your view on the use of native grass in place of bluegrass in the urban landscapes around Fort Collins?

Results:

Value		Percent	Responses
I prefer to see more native grass than bluegrass in urban landscapes		77.1%	712
I prefer to see more bluegrass than native grass in urban landscapes		4.3%	40
It depends		18.6%	172

Totals: 924

Comments Summary:

Most folks want to see native grasses more than bluegrass. However, a good majority of those folks knew that native grasses are difficult to grow and maintain, which could potentially turn them weedy and unattractive. Some folks mentioned the same thing with bluegrass, it is more about the planning and upkeep associated is what matters. Well-maintained is a very common expectation. Many respondents expected the city to provide resources, such as education and incentives to help lead the way. Quite a few comments understand the function of the area to landscape is highly important to what is planted, and water conservation should be greatly considered into this

Key Comments:

1. Native grasses are beneficial to wildlife and don't require as much water so I would prefer to see them in most spaces over bluegrass. Providing educational resources about native grasses in green spaces and neighborhoods might convince more folks to make the switch from bluegrass
2. I have fallen in love with the prairie grasses - with the look, with how they wave in the wind and look in winter. On the other hand, I look at some of my neighbors' lawns that used to be grass and are now mostly weeds, and I don't think they'd take care of a prairie grass landscape.
3. I would prefer the use of more resource-taxing bluegrass to be limited to recreation spaces like ball fields and playgrounds. Native grasses are better for space meant only to be seen. (You should never see a "keep off grass" sign on mown lawn.

- From your description it sounds like native grass isn't appropriate for parks, fields, or other gathering places. I guess because of that I'd like to see a balance between the 2, however that works out to make each place functional. Ratios don't matter much.
- It would be nice to allow a variety of water-wise options. With micro-climates there is no one size fits all. Provide options to navigate specific site conditions and educate around how and why these changes are valuable to the homeowner and larger environment.

Question 8. Do you think artificial turf should be allowed in Fort Collins?

Results:

Value	Percent	Responses
Yes, in all situations	15.1%	130
Yes, in some situations	33.6%	290
Yes, in very limited situations	22.6%	195
No, never	14.6%	126
Unsure	14.0%	121
Totals: 862		

Comments Summary:

Most respondents recognize that artificial turf has a large affect on environmental health, but many commented on how it could be a better option than a high-water use landscape. There were strongly in support of artificial turf and those that think it should be 100% banned, but most people were somewhere in the middle that it is okay to use in small amounts. People's comments on the environmental affects were that of leaching plastic in the water, increasing flooding during storms due to runoff, its affect on soil health, wildlife habitat, and pollinator species. It also gets extremely hot and roasts the surrounding area to make it harder for trees and other species to survive, plus the lack of water limits any runoff to trees. Respondents that have worked with artificial turf mention it needs proper installation and maintenance, which includes watering it for hygienic reason if dogs were to use it as a bathroom. Areas that people would be okay seeing artificial turf in would be small areas that have function, most often recreation, but also for property owners that are not able to maintain a live yard. There were a lot of comments on just how ugly artificial turf is, and they don't think it reflects Fort Collins. A very common response was "I don't know enough to make a decision" so education is critical with any artificial turf policies.

Key Comments:

- Artificial turf isn't very attractive overall, so maybe only in back yards. Also, I'm not sure about the environmental implications of whether they help retain soil moisture or if they shed microplastics into the watershed - if this is the case, then no artificial turf.

2. I don't know enough about artificial turf, but I think there may be specific settings where it would make sense. I would defer to local experts on what they recommend, particularly paying attention to the impact on our environment
3. Artificial turf increases residential heat, decreases animal habitat, and increases plastic pollution. I do not think replacing bluegrass with artificial turf is a net positive. It should be allowed but in carefully managed circumstances.
4. I do not have a lot of experience with artificial turf, but it sounds like a good solution.
5. Artificial does not require water to maintain. I don't object to people choosing this as a cost saving alternative to xeric landscaping even though I personally find it unsightly.

Question 9. When you work on landscape projects, do you incorporate soil amendment?

Results:

Value		Percent	Responses
Yes		54.1%	500
Sometimes		17.7%	164
No		3.4%	31
No, but I plan to start		6.2%	57
N/A - I don't have landscape projects		18.6%	172

Totals: 924

Comments Summary:

Simply, most people add amendment to their soil. Most people add amendment knowing the benefits to our clay soils, a few did it because it was required, but most people didn't even know it was required. A common response was it is hard to grow anything here without amending the soils, that its needed, and many people also stressed the importance of plant's needs. For example, natives don't like highly amended or rich soils. Only a few people provided amounts in this survey, but most people just "add" compost, or some sort of amendment based on the tag of the plant, the nursery/landscaper's recommendation, but rarely in very defined amounts. A common response was that they just didn't know it was required or they didn't know it was beneficial; this would have been the first time they heard of soil amendment. There was a strong push to not allow peat as the mining of peat is environmentally degrading. Some people were focused on the water savings associated, but most spoke to the benefits of plant health. Finally, there were enough comments to mention that increased education and incentivizing the adding of amendment would be good to see from the city.

Key Comments:

1. I always include soil amendments to help in water retention, however, I try to avoid peat when possible since it is not sustainable. I prefer to use compost instead.
2. The minimal requirement should be 3cy per 1000sf. Personally, We typically amend residential at this rate. At my personal home I amend with 6-10cy per 1000sf. increasing the minimum amendment rate will result in better establishment of plants and quicker establishment of turf grass. This will also result in lower water consumption throughout the life cycle.
3. We have worked to amend our soil in the front yard when we converted from landscaping rock to mulch with garden in a boxes. However we haven't worked on the backyard yet. It can be a lot of physical labor and I am disabled, so it can be costly for us since we have to hire help
4. We did a xeriscape project through City (class with utilities refund) and did significant amendment to the area xeriscaped. Major improvement in water efficiency for that portion of the yard.
5. I am a professional gardener and I deal with all kinds of soils. We do amend the immediate area when we plant and I encourage people to plant specimens that can thrive in clay soils. Amending large areas of heavy clay is impractical for most - Expensive and labor intensive. People rarely choose amending.

Question 10. Do you have any additional thoughts to share regarding soil amendments?

Results:



Comments Summary:

There were two most common answers to this question. One, most people did not know about the regulation and believe the City is responsible for providing education and encouragement to see this through. Secondly, there were many comments about pushing the city to start a composting program, that can be used for the amendment. Even though most people amend

the soil, very few knew it was a regulation and even fewer were in support of a notarized certification. Many people believe the certification process should be simpler and that at its current state may even discourage projects. A few people mentioned how this should be encouraged but not regulated and this idea of a certification, especially for residential properties, is government overreach. A few respondents think it's best to increase the soil amendment requirement, while most people wanted an easier way to understand process of the whole thing. Most people were in support of this policy but 1) didn't know and 2) had some qualms with minor parts of the ordinance - enough so that a re-evaluation should take place (i.e., what does "all landscape projects" mean and is that appropriate?)

Key Comments:

1. This seems more like a public awareness issue than a follow-the-rules issue. The City and the public's incentives are aligned.
2. If we had a city composting program, this could be coordinated with the push for xeriscaping in commercial and residential areas.
3. I think many people don't know what soil amendments are or the purpose of them, and probably don't even know that they are a requirement. Maybe there needs to be some more education about this?
4. As an industry professional, I can say as a fact that this does not happen consistently and needs to be policed especially with regards to builder's landscapers. I have witnessed, on several occasions, a truck pulling a dump trailer down the road, with several new homes being landscaped at the same time, where a worker is in the trailer scooping out compost and throwing it into the yards. subsequently, new sod is already on site and workers rake the compost evenly and lay the sod right down on top. Never is there any tilling to six inches into existing backfill and never does the quota of 3cy/1000sf get met.
5. Sounds like it can get expensive. If I was doing a project on a budget I would likely ignore the requirement or just nix the project entirely.
6. This is a totally un-enforceable code, but new construction should always be inspected. Just let people know. I've lived here over 40 years and didn't know this.

A public survey and invitations to one-on-one conversations with staff were extended to the following stakeholder groups:

Reached out to 162 unique emails, 25 sub-audiences

1. Affordable housing provider
2. Authorities (PFA)
3. Big Developers
4. Builders
5. Building/Engineering
6. Chamber of Commerce
7. Conservancy
8. County
9. Environmental Advocacy
10. Environmental Consultants
11. HOAs
12. Individuals
13. Land Grant Universities
14. Landscape Architects
15. Landscape material supplies (wholesale)
16. Landscape Professionals
17. Landscape supply stores (retail)
18. Mom & Pop Developers
19. Nurseries & Wholesalers
20. Previous FCU program participants
21. Property managers
22. Restoration Contractors
23. Societies
24. Visitors to Fort Collins
25. City Departments

Engagement with 21 individual groups, 13 sub-audiences

1. Authorities (PFA)
2. Big Developers
3. Builders
4. Land Grant Universities
5. Landscape Architects
6. Landscape Professionals
7. Landscape supply stores (retail)
8. HOAs
9. NoCo Homebuilders Association
10. Board of Realtors
11. Water Commission
12. Natural Resource Advisory Board
13. City Departments