

City of Vista

Tree/Pollinator Plant Giveaway Program Policy

I. Program

This policy describes the City of Vista's Tree/Pollinator Plant Giveaway Program (Program), which provides trees and pollinator plants free of charge to residents and businesses of Vista that meet Program requirements. It provides the process for requesting, planting, and caring for a new tree or pollinator plant under the Program. The following initiatives and events are available to eligible participants. Applications will be accepted until Program funds have been expended, and will be approved on a first-come, first-served basis.

a. Private Property Tree/Pollinator Plant Planting Initiative

Through the Private Property Tree/Pollinator Plant Planting Initiative, Residents can request: one (1) voucher for picking up an Approved Plant at a Local Nursery; free curbside delivery of an Approved Plant from a Local Nursery; or reimbursement for an Approved Plant purchased at a Local Nursery. Residents must submit an application and meet other Program requirements described in this policy.

b. Commercial Tree/Pollinator Plant Planting Initiative

Through this initiative, Businesses can request up to three (3) free Approved Plants. Trees must be on the Approved Plant list and available for delivery, voucher, or reimbursement when purchased at a Local Nursery. Interested businesses must submit an application and meet other Program requirements described in this policy.

c. Tree/Pollinator Plant Giveaway Events

Through Tree/Pollinator Plant Giveaway Events, event attendees can pick up one (1) free Approved Plant at a City of Vista sponsored giveaway event. Event attendees must submit an onsite application and meet other Program requirements described in this policy.

II. Purpose

The Program provides trees and pollinator plants to Vista residents and businesses to advance environmental equity, instill a sense of belonging, and improve overall health and quality of life for residents and visitors. The Program increases the local tree canopy on private properties, improves wildlife habitat, and mitigates the effects of climate change. The Program further raises public awareness of the benefits of trees and pollinator plants.

III. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

- a. Residents: a person living within the city limits of Vista, CA who has verifiable proof of residency. This includes a driver's license with a current address, a state of California ID

card with a current address, or official mail such as a billing statement from a utility provider.

- b. **Businesses:** a business located within the city limits of Vista, CA who has an active Vista Business License.
- c. **Approved Plant:** a tree or pollinator plant that is listed on the Vista Private Planting Program List which is posted on the City's webpage.
- d. **Local Nursery:** a nursery that is located in Vista, CA, its adjacent cities, or sphere of influence and has an active Vista business license.
- e. **Proof of Purchase:** a receipt from a local nursery which specifies the kind of Approved Plant purchase, the purchase price, where it was purchased, and when it was purchased.
- f. **Voucher:** a certificate from the City to approved Program Applicants to cover the cost of a 10 to 15-gallon Approved Plant from a City-selected Local Nursery.
- g. **Planting Location Checklist:** a list of required planting conditions for an Approved Plant.
- h. **Right of Way (ROW):** A form of easement that grants use rights in a parcel of land to a non-owner and the rights to which are vested in members of the public. Generally located over and across public streets and adjacent facilities including parkways, sidewalks, curbs and gutters, and utilities.

IV. Eligibility Requirements

The Program is open to Residents and Businesses who own property in the City of Vista or have approval from the property owner to plant an Approved Plant. Applicants must agree to follow the Tree Planting Guide, which excludes planting locations in any public right-of-way, unless a Tree Giveaway application has been submitted and a No Fee Street Tree Permit Application has been approved. The Program limits one Approved Plant per residential address or three (3) Approved Plants per business address and does not obligate the City to provide a replacement if an Approved Plant fails to thrive.

All applicants are required to submit a complete online application through the [Microsoft form](#) provided on the Program's website. The application is also available in PDF form on the City's [Residential Tree Giveaway](#) webpage. The application requires applicants to submit their name, address, proof of address (and certification of an active Vista Business License for businesses), certification of suitable planting conditions (including property owner approval), and Waiver of Liability (see Section VI). Participants who receive trees must also agree to the Tree Steward Pledge (see Section VII) and follow the Young Tree Best Care Practices (see Section VIII).

Applicants who participated in past Tree Giveaway Programs are eligible to participate in this year's program, however, we require a photo submission and status update of the previous year's planted tree or plant.

V. Application Process

- a. Tree/Pollinator Plant Planting Initiative with Voucher
 - i. **Complete and submit the application to reserve an Approved Plant**
Submit a complete application form and Staff will confirm its completion and applicant's eligibility.

Participants must send the City proof of planting by sending a photo of the planted Approved Plant using the [Microsoft form](#) or to the climateaction@vista.gov

c. Tree/Pollinator Plant Planting Initiative with Reimbursement

i. **Complete and submit the application to apply for reimbursement**

Submit a complete application form and Staff will confirm its completion, applicant eligibility. Applicants requesting reimbursement are asked to submit the name of tree for approval by Staff BEFORE purchasing to confirm eligibility.

ii. **Purchase an approved tree/plant from Local Nursery**

Go to a Local Nursery and purchase an Approved Plant. Retain your proof of purchase that demonstrates the plant is an Approved Plant, was purchased from a Local Nursery, and lists the cost of the item and date of purchase. The City will only reimburse an Approved Plant purchase that is \$100.00 or less.

iii. **Plant your Approved Plant at your residence/business**

Once you have your Approved Plant, you must plant it in an area that meets the Tree Planting Guidelines and, for trees, you must follow the Young Tree Care Best Practices.

iv. **Complete and submit the reimbursement application with proof of purchase and planting within 30 days of purchase**

Submit a complete reimbursement application form with proof of purchase and proof of planting (photo of the planted Approved Plant). Staff will confirm application completion and applicant's eligibility, if not already done.

v. **Receive your reimbursement from the City**

After the application is approved by the City, participants will receive reimbursement from the City via check, mailed to the City of Vista address listed on the application form.

d. Tree/Pollinator Plants Giveaway Events

- i. The City occasionally hosts Residential Tree/Pollinator Plants Giveaway Events at which the City will provide Approved Plants at no cost to Residents. These events may be in partnership with other City events and may include a tree planting workshop. Recipients of these trees or pollinator plants must transport the tree or pollinator plant to their residence and plant it in an area that meets the Planting Location Checklist, and, for trees, you must follow the Young Tree Care Best Practices.

VI. Planting in the Public Right of Way

Participants interested in planting in the right-of-way must signify interest on their application and submit a signed No Fee Street Tree Permit Application along with their Tree Giveaway

Application. You may not plant in the right-of-way until you receive an approved No Fee Street Tree Permit Application from the City. By planting in the public right-of-way adjacent to your property, you agree to be responsible for the planting and care of the tree/pollinator plant. However, the city may remove the tree if it is found to be dead or diseased or to constitute a hazard to the public or to any person or property, including impeding public access. (VMC 19.24). Participants must choose one of the six available street trees and obtain city staff approval and be approved by the Public Works Department for planting in the Right of Way.

VII. Waiver of Liability

As part of the Program application, participants acknowledge and accept the following:

“I agree to hold harmless the City and each officer and employee thereof from any and all claims, demands, losses, damages or expenses that applicant may sustain or incur resulting from the City’s Residential Tree/Pollinator Plant Giveaway Program.”

VIII. Tree Steward Pledge

Experts agree that a newly planted tree typically needs one year for each inch in diameter of the trunk to regain a normal root system. For example, a three-inch diameter newly planted tree will need at least three years in the ground to become fully established. As part of the application, Program participants must agree to the following:

“I pledge to plant my tree using the best practices videos on the City’s website, paying special attention to site placement, using the tree’s root flare to determine proper planting depth, and potential conflicts and/or conditions that may affect the tree’s health as it establishes and grows into maturity.

I pledge to water my tree regularly (10-15 gallons per week for a period of up to 5 years) to help it fully establish and grow strong.

I pledge to maintain a watering basin at the base of my tree, and I will keep this area free of debris.

I pledge to keep my tree properly staked for a period of two years before removing them, so its trunk doesn’t slant while its roots are growing and forming a strong foundation.

I pledge to monitor the health of my tree and will contact a certified arborist or tree expert for guidance as necessary.”

IX. Young Tree Care Best Practices

All trees start small and much of a tree’s success and development is determined in its first five years during a period referred to as young tree establishment. During this time, the tree is spreading critical roots and branches, adapting to environmental conditions (like water

availability), and gaining stability from interactions with winds and storms/drought. Therefore, young tree care activities are essential – like supplemental watering, prune training, temporary staking, and mulching. Note: many of these activities can taper off to as-needed activities after the tree is established.

For the best possible outcome for your tree, it is highly recommended that prior to the pickup and planting of your tree, you review tree planting guidelines and videos posted on the Tree & Urban Forest Management webpage or attend a tree planting workshop hosted by [Tree San Diego](#).

Consideration of your planting location is extremely important. Contact [DigAlert \(Call 811\)](#) to make sure you are avoiding your underground utilities such as; water, sewer, electrical, and gas lines. Tree roots can be destructive to these underground utilities. In addition to not being in the public right-of-way, your tree should not be planted closer than 5 feet to a sidewalk as tree roots can interfere with the stability of the sidewalk.