

NATIVE PLANT GARDENS FOR SCHOOLS AND URBAN AREAS

GRANT APPLICATIONS – SOME ADVICE

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For several years I have reviewed grant applications for funding native plant gardens or native plant community gardens. All too often people with the best intentions in the world need help in designing native plant gardens and in figuring out why they wanted to do this in the first place-- before they apply. Good intentions do not pave the path to narrowly-focused funding.

How to avoid some basic pitfalls of the grant application process, especially a grant with very specialized requirements for funding?

Consider the following:

- 1) Grant applications requiring data should not be filled out the night before the grant application deadline.
- 2) The person(s) writing the grant should not cut and paste together a lot of inconsistent material and then hastily edit it. Ask at least one other person with good reading skills to read it for clarity and comprehension.
- 3) If the garden designer and grant applicant do not understand the requirements of the granting organization, don't apply for the grant.
- 4) A good garden design selecting plants to match the site parameters and climate, allowing room for healthy plant root systems and healthy above-ground growth and conserving water on-site may be water-conserving and sustainable as well as a healthy native plant community.
- 5) A bad garden design has crowded plants, plants incompatible with the soil type and drainage, shade plants in direct sun or next to a hot wall, perhaps plants requiring full sun that are in the shade, or plants incompatible with each other.
- 6) If the persons designing the garden do not agree on a consistent design and/or the goals for the school or urban garden, don't apply for any grants.
- 7) If the application says "draw to scale", measure the site and draw it correctly on a paper with a grid, e.g. paper from an engineering pad. Photographs are helpful but are not a substitute.
- 8) Surfing the web or skimming a field guide to choose native plants is not good.
- 9) Selecting native plants on the basis of their flower shapes and colors is not good.
- 10) Understanding terms such as "habitat" and "plant community" and what information is needed to plan a healthy native plant garden is good.
- 11) Knowing whether a mature native plant will be a 40-foot tree with a 40-foot diameter canopy, or a shrub 2-feet tall that spreads 40 feet, or an annual herb 1-foot tall before buying it is good.
- 12) Don't claim extensive research and advice from experts in the application unless the text and design support those claims. Those experts might be reviewing the application.