

Larkspur Native Plant Resolution for 2026

Resolution Goal: To formally acknowledge the community and ecological benefits of native plant landscaping and establish a path forward to integrate native plant usage into city policy

TITLE: A Resolution of the City of Larkspur Establishing Native Plant Landscaping as a City priority with an Implementation Framework to Promote Local Biodiversity and Community Resilience

WHEREAS, the current Larkspur General Plan recognizes the importance of sustainability in present and future actions of the city; and

WHEREAS, sustainability requires balancing human needs for development with maintaining and enhancing environmental quality; and

WHEREAS, the Larkspur City Council on September 6, 2023, recognized the international consensus that our current environmental crisis contains as its principal components the biodiversity crisis, the climate crisis and the pollution crisis; and

WHEREAS, California leads the nation in the number of plants and animals at risk for extinction, and [studies now show](#) dramatic declines in invertebrate populations and a [73% decline in vertebrates](#) worldwide; and

WHEREAS, according to Conservation International, habitat loss is the leading cause of species extinction, and California is the only U.S. biodiversity hotspot among the world's 36; and

WHEREAS, because native plants have co-evolved with local wildlife and are essential to local ecosystems, they help to address the biodiversity crisis through their own presence and by supporting all of the species that use them for food and shelter; and

WHEREAS, native plants in the built environment can be a complement to California's biodiversity and conservation goals by providing corridor habitat connecting conserved areas; and

WHEREAS, native plants help to address both the cause and the effects of the climate crisis by drawing down carbon from the atmosphere, by using less water, and by being more resilient to future change because of their higher genetic diversity; and

WHEREAS, native plants help to reduce pollution by hosting fewer pests and by not being vectors for introduction of new pests, thus contributing to lower pesticide needs; and

WHEREAS, native plants provide significant economic benefits by encouraging local businesses that produce them and by lowering certain costs for those who maintain them, such as for irrigation, pest management and mowing; and

WHEREAS, native plants reflect the unique character of our region — from coastal bluffs to desert basins and fertile valleys — serving not only ecological functions but also as living symbols of each community's identity and sense of place that together constitute the local natural heritage

WHEREAS, California's native plants have important cultural and educational value both for Native Californians and for those who have come to call California home; and

WHEREAS, California's varied climates and landscapes call for locally appropriate native plant selections that honor regional ecology, culture, and community values rather than a single uniform approach; and

WHEREAS, the use of regionally significant native plants in public and private spaces helps tell the story of a community's natural heritage, fostering civic pride, environmental stewardship, and intergenerational connection; and

WHEREAS, the inclusion of native plants in public spaces supports equitable access to natural environments for a growing population of Californians without personal yards and private land ownership; and

WHEREAS, when native plants are visible in our neighborhoods, schools, parks, and workplaces, they become daily reminders of the landscapes that shape us and the responsibility we share to care for them; and

WHEREAS, the City of Larkspur recently has seen the establishment of a significant number of highly visible new landscaping projects featuring native plants, including those in, at, or adjacent to Niven Point, the Magnolia Avenue median, the downtown bus stop, the Central Marin Police station, Hall Middle School and the new Library; and

WHEREAS, these plantings have improved the health of both Larkspur's human residents and their environment, and in doing so have been not only an important local response to our global environmental crisis but also an example of the implementation of the One Health concept; and

WHEREAS, they have shown how efforts to identify and promote regionally meaningful native plants have allowed our community to advance conservation and identity in a way that reflects its own history, environment, and vision for the future; and

WHEREAS, the City of Larkspur, named after a native plant in 1891, wishes to extend all of these benefits through a commitment to increasing the use of native vegetation on all new multi-family residential, commercial,

industrial, and public projects to restore natural habitats, promote local biodiversity, and support ecosystem resilience; and

WHEREAS, for the purpose of this policy, native plants are defined as plants naturally occurring here prior to European contact that provide ecological and community benefits that non-native plants cannot,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Larkspur City Council] hereby supports maximizing native plant use for all new multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, and public projects as a critical first step in improving ecosystem health, while promoting environmental stewardship and community connection; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that staff is directed to implement the following framework by

1. Establishing a Larkspur working group to advance a native plant landscaping ordinance by 2030, requiring the use of native plants in all new multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, and public projects; and
2. Providing a list of local native vegetation with consideration for appropriate cultivated native plant hybrids to be used as a landscaping palette for the city's use; and
3. Providing outreach resources encouraging residents to use the native vegetation landscaping palette for their personal yards and supportive resources with guidance for native plant landscaping techniques; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall take effect immediately upon its passage and adoption.