

ALTERNATIVES TO LAWNS: Inspiration and Ideas for Ecological Design



WHY DO WE LIKE LAWNS?

- Lawns do some things best
- Green denotes lush, moist, abundant
- Historically “safe”—no hidden enemies
- Maybe we don’t know what else to do
- Traditional—England & East Coast
- Negative space is a restful contrast
- To fit in with neighborhood style

WHAT’S WRONG WITH LAWNS?

- Monoculture is ecologically unbalanced
- High fossil fuel input—gasoline, chemicals
- Reduces habitat diversity
- High water usage
- Pesticides & herbicides are poisonous
- Labor intensive

STYLES & INTERPRETATIONS

- California Native
- Modern/Contemporary
- Woodland
- Mediterranean
- Asian/Japanese
- English Cottage Garden
- Formal/European/Italian/French
- Eclectic

IDEAS

- Children’s Garden
- Butterfly Garden
- Habitat Garden
- Sculpture Garden
- Herb Garden
- Zen Meditation Garden
- Cactus/Desert Garden
- Games
- Electric train garden
- Outdoor camping area with a fire circle
- Fairy Garden
- Water Garden
- Bird Watching Garden
- Edible Garden
- Cutting Flower Garden
- Feng Shui Garden
- Rock Garden
- Dog garden (include a ‘digging area’ to hide bones)

RESOURCES

Going Native Garden Tour - April goingnativegardentour.org
California Native Plant Society www.cnps.org
Yerba Buena Demonstration Garden www.yerbabuenanursery.com
Professional Lawn Replacement www.naturalfrontyards.com
California Native Garden Foundation www.cngf.org
Sustainable Landscaping Site with lists of professionals and pictures
www.landscapestandards.com

HOW TO REMOVE YOUR LAWN DEVA LUNA 9/17/2010
EarthCare Landscaping www.earthcareland.com 408-871-2792

- Turf covers 32 million acres of land in U.S., which is 2% of the land mass!
- Lawn mowers account for 5% of air pollution (a 3.5 hp lawnmower for one hour = driving an automobile 350 miles)
- 30-60% of urban fresh water is used to water lawns
- 2000 sft lawn produces 600-800 lb. clippings per summer

WHAT KIND OF LAWN DO YOU HAVE:

- Turf without perennial weeds
- Turf with perennial weeds like Bermuda Grass, St. Augustine Grass (invasive running grasses) or Oxalis – needs a different strategy

GENERAL PRINCIPLES Natural processes can aide you, shade out lawn and let it decompose. Must be persistant and thorough

TECHNIQUES:

Scalp (and then smother)

- Weed Whacker (String Trimmer)
- Lawn mower, on lowest setting
- Sheep

Sod cut and flip

Rototill

Solarize

- During hot weather
- Scalp the turf
- (optional, add compost or manure)
- Moist soil
- Clear plastic
- Tack down edges
- No air pockets
- 6-8 weeks
- Sterilizes the top 3-4” of soil

Chicken Tractor

Sheet compost

- One possible lawn removal “recipe”
 - 1” manure or alfalfa (high N)
 - 5 layers newspapers (weed barrier)
 - 2” compost
 - 3” free arbor mulch
 - 1” purchased bark chips on top
- Layers of organic matter that you can plant directly into
- Make a planting pocket of good soil
- Similar to Lasagna Gardening

- You can flip the sod over so the grass is upside-down. Let it rot.

- Edge pieces can be flipped and piled into mounds

Sod cut and give away

- Put an ad on Craigslist or Freecycle

Remove

- Small areas, use pick & shovel
- Rent a sod-cutter if grade too high, or noxious weeds are present
- Remove to landfill or other location to dry out thoroughly
- Two passes may be necessary
- Rototill, and rake out Bermuda
- Follow up by spot weeding anything that re-sprouts

CALCULATOR: Bulk materials are measured in cubic yards. To figure how many yards you need: Square foot coverage (width x length) X number of inches of depth. Then divide by 324.
Example: to put 3” of mulch on a 20 x 30 area = 600sft
 $3 \times 600 = 1800 / 324 = 5.555 = 5 \frac{1}{2}$ yards.