

Alternative Turf

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Organic Roots



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Lawn Stats

- 63,000 sq. miles of lawn in U.S. (size of Texas)
- 50 – 75 % of residential water use is on lawns
- Lawns get 3 – 10 lbs of pesticide / acre compared to 2.7 lbs for agriculture.
- In a 1995 list of inert ingredients for pesticides, 394 were listed as active ingredients in other pesticides.
- From www.beyondpesticides.org

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Alternative Turf-What/Why

- Plants that aren't in a typical lawn
- Typical lawn with added plants
- Less maintenance
- Less water and fertilizer
- Different aesthetic
- Support pollinators/wildlife

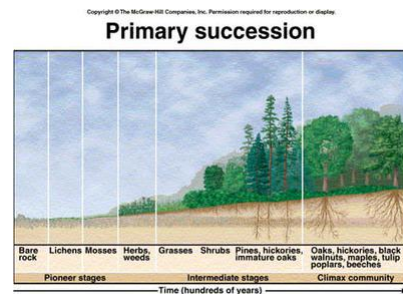
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Alternatives to Herbicides

- Alternative turf requires alternative weed control methods.
- Go organic!
- Healthy soil - healthy plants.
- Weed control through soil microbiology.
- Flame weeding
- Weedslayer spot treat

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Ecological Succession



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Root-feeding Nematode

- Fungal Hyphae ensnaring a root feeding Nematode to keep it from root



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Are spring weeds good?

- Creeping Charlie has inconsistent nectar
- Dandelion pollen has low protein
- Charlie is better than no bloom and any bloom is better than Charlie



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Best Places for Alt Lawns

- Steep slopes
- Deep shade
- Boulevards
- Low wet areas
- Hot dry conditions
- Shrink the lawns



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Dutch White Clover

- Requires less water
- Puts nitrogen in soil
- Works best in a blend
- Bees love it!
- 4% = 1 fert application
- Repels beetles and grubs



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Fine Fescue Blends

- Half the water of bluegrass, less if not mowed
- Needs 2/3 to 1/6th the fertilizer of bluegrass
- Works great as a base for other species like clover and other flowering species



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Tall Fescue

- Much lower maintenance than bluegrass
- Roots can get 30" deep!
- Good base for adding flowers



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Buffalo Grass

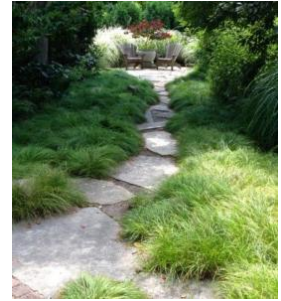
- Native
- Sod or seed
- Likes hot dry soil
- Boulevards



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Pennsylvania Sedge

- Native
- Sod-forming
- Likes dry shade
- Other sedges work too.



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Prairie Drop Seed

- Native
- 4 season interest
- Great with other plants
- Tolerates dry soil after established



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Creeping Thyme

- Great for hot dry areas
- Good in blended plantings
- Use different colors



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Personal Prairie

- Lightly rake to fluff grass clippings.
- Scatter prairie seeds.
- Mow high and maintain lawn organically for 2 years.
- Stop mowing year 3 and watch it grow!



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Bee Lawns

- Bee friendly plants
- Beelab.umn.edu
- Best if dormant-seeded in late Oct or Nov
- Fine fescue blend with flowers
- Self heal, creeping thyme, dutch white clover, and others



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Reduce with Natives



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Most Bang For the Buck

- Fine fescue with 4% clover
- Plant small native Pollinator Gardens



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Soil Prep

- Solarization
- Occultation
- Organic herbicide kill all
- Turf removal and till
- Sheet composting

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Solarization

- Takes months
- Degrades into Parkinson's causing compounds, so don't use on food producing areas
- Kills beneficial soil microbes
- Kills weed seeds



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Occultation

- Uses black plastic
- Blocks light for a full season
- Weed seeds survive
- Anything plastic imparts toxins into soil, some cause Parkinson's



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Organic Herbicide

- Kills everything it touches
- Molasses and clove oil
- May need repeat applications
- Need citric acid to lower pH of water
- Should be re-certified organic soon



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Strip and Till

- Cut sod, take to compost site, return with compost, and till
- Plan to use erosion control to hold soil and seed



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Sheet Compost

- AKA Lasagna gardening
- Smothers most vegetation
- Enriches soil and builds beneficial soil food web



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Water area day before.

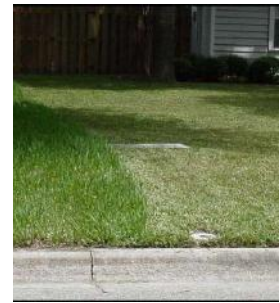
- Give it an inch before working.
- About 2 hours irrigation time.



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Cut 'er down!

- Mow short and leave clippings.
- Slash vegetation and leave it.
- Remove woody material if needed.



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Molasses

- Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup molasses with 2 gallons of water.
- Sprinkle over 300 sq. ft. area.



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Add Compost

- $\frac{1}{4}$ " to 1" quality compost.
- Many composts from big box stores have been pasteurized and are no good.



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Cardboard!

- Use clean cardboard.
- Remove labels, tape staples.
- 2or 3 layers thick.
- Overlap so no bare spots.
- Soak it after laying to hold it in place.



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After cardboard

- Add soil/compost 1"-2" thick.
- Seed with your choice of seed
- Or mulch to plant starter plants
- Tap-rooted and tuberous plants survive, but pull easy



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Canadian Thistle

- Chop and drop
- Sheet compost
- Surviving plants are easy to pull



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Sheet Mulched + 60 days



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Thistle Residue



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Thistles to Natives



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Easy Sheet Compost

- Cut down existing vegetation. Remove large woody material.
- Spray or sprinkle a solution of ¼ cup un-sulfured molasses to 2 gal. of water over a 300 sq. ft. area.
- Apply ¼" to 1" of quality compost.
- Lay 2 or 3 layers of clean brown cardboard, free of tape and labels. 30 sheets of newspaper works too.
- Water every layer thoroughly.
- Can top with soil and cover crops or mulch.
- Best results in August and let it work over winter.
- Can be done in spring for fall planting.

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Resources

- beelab.umn.edu bee lawn info
- www.beyondpesticides.org pesticide info
- www.prairiemoon.com seeds and supplies
- www.prairienursery.com seeds and supplies
- www.bluethumb.org for lots of turf alternative info
- www.xerces.org pollinator info

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More Resources

- Organic Bob LLC DIY products and support
- Composted dairy manure (Cowsmo brand)
- Bagged compost: Mississippi Top Soils, Hsu's and Cowsmoo
- Weedslayer at allstatesorganicsupply.com
- Bee Lawn Seed Twin City Seed Co on Amazon

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Food & Family Security



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Need Help?

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