



Lawn Reduction

Imagine your outdoor space not just as a patch of grass, but as a vibrant, living landscape. This isn't just a dream – it's a practical and impactful step you can take to help support wildlife.

The traditional American lawn plays a surprisingly big role in our environmental footprint. Turf grass lawns often rely on pesticides, fertilizers, polluting machinery, and excessive water consumption for their maintenance. Meanwhile, they provide little to no food or habitat for native wildlife.

Transforming your lawn into a native plant haven is more than just a landscaping trend; it's a vital step towards nurturing biodiversity and promoting a healthy local ecosystem. Making the choice to replace lawn with native habitat has huge positive effects on biodiversity and the environment.

Did you Know?

Our lawns cover over 40 million acres of land in the U.S.¹ That's an area as large as the entire state of Colorado! These green carpets demand immense resources – including a staggering 9 billion gallons of water per day nationwide.²

1. Milesi, C., Running, S. W., Elvidge, C. D., Dietz, J. B., Tuttle, B. T., & Nemani, R. R. (2005). Mapping and modeling the biogeochemical cycling of turf grasses in the United States. *Environmental Management*, 36(3), 426–438.
2. Start Saving | US EPA. (n.d.). US EPA. <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/start-saving>



Tips & Info

Turf Grass Alternatives That Help Wildlife

Embracing alternatives to turf grass lawns can significantly enhance your garden's appeal to wildlife while maintaining its aesthetic value. Here are some wildlife-friendly options:

Native Plant Beds and Meadows: Reduce the size of your lawn by creating new garden beds planted with native trees, shrubs, wildflower and grasses. Consider transforming open space into meadows that include taller, native nectar plants like milkweed, goldenrod, and asters.

Natural Lawns: Don't use herbicides and instead allow a variety of plants to make up your lawn. Moss phlox and low-growing native wildflowers such as violets significantly improve the value of lawn areas for wildlife.

Moss: Native mosses provide a uniform, green appearance without the need for mowing or pesticides. Moss thrives in conditions where turf grass struggles, such as compacted, rocky soil, shady areas, or on slopes. Once established, moss lawns typically don't require watering, going dormant in dry spells and reviving with rainfall.

Rock Gardens: Rock gardens can provide shelter and breeding habitat for a variety of small creatures. They are ideal for areas prone to drought, requiring no watering or maintenance, and are more appropriate than grass lawns in arid regions. Add mosses and low-growing, drought-tolerant wildflowers in shady areas. In sunny areas, stonecrop and moss phlox can work well.

Low or No Mow Lawns: Consider using native 'No Mow' lawn grass seed. These grasses grow densely and have deep roots, making them drought-tolerant and low-maintenance. Alternatively, just mow your traditional lawn less, leaving it no shorter than 4 inches.

How to Get Started

Embarking on the journey to transform your lawn into a wildlife-friendly habitat can be both exciting rewarding—and is easier than you might expect!

Plan: Before making changes, check your homeowners' association (HOA) or municipal guidelines regarding landscaping. Practice neighbor-friendly gardening by planning out how you want your new wildlife-friendly space to look. Consider using defined garden beds for a neat appearance.

Seek Support: Look for state or county incentives for lawn reduction. Some states provide rebates for sustainable lawn practices. Contact your state or county sustainability offices to see if you may be eligible.

Consider Signage: Think about the impact of your garden design and how it can be a face of wildlife conservation. Posting a sign on your landscape, such as a Certified Wildlife Habitat® sign, can help explain your intent and alleviate concern from neighbors.

Convert Turf Grass: Convert your lawn by covering the turf grass with layers of wet newspaper or cardboard, topped with about 4-6 inches of soil. This method will smother the grass and prepare the area for planting in about 4-6 weeks. Select native plants that are suitable for your region and the specific conditions of your garden (sunlight, soil type, etc.).

Maintenance: You can further enhance the habitat quality of your outdoor space by eliminating use of lawn pesticides and fertilizers and switching to manual or electric lawn care equipment to reduce pollution.

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