

Lawn Alternatives

or the Low Maintenance Garden

by Martha Cox

Are you tired of weekly mowing? Twice weekly watering? Skyrocketing water bills? Are you thinking of ways to cut back on water? Lawns



are a very high maintenance, high cost non-sustainable way to cover the ground. If you want to keep some for the children's splash pool or some other important reason then do so, but eliminate or shrink the lawn that is not being used. Having a lawn just to look at is resource inefficient,



especially on slopes and shady areas.

Replacing turf with groundcovers, shrubs, and trees will reduce the use of water, synthetic fertilizers, and polluting machines such as mowers, edgers, blowers. In the end it will save you time and money.

If you are traveling southwest on I-80, visit the terrace garden, part of the UC Davis Arboretum for ideas, also the Ruth Risdon Storer Garden for examples of low-maintenance water conserving gardens. Visit local gardens and come to the Nursery and ask for lawn alternative groundcovers. My favorite is low growing yarrow. It flowers, spreads on its own, is very drought tolerant, and is fire retardant. Another succulent group of colorful low growing plants is the sedums. They are fire and drought tolerant because they store water. Another favorite is Snow in Summer, *Cerastium*



tomentosum: fast growing with masses of tiny white flowers in spring and a lovely silver grey foliage. I love all of the thyme varieties.

I plan to make a patchwork quilt out of thyme varieties someday.

Author and horticulturist, John Greenlee says, "Lawns are the fast food of the American landscape. Replace them with meadows and bioswales." Bioswales are the low spot in the landscape that prevent run off of winter rain, sometimes called the rain garden.

Meadows have ornamental grasses of different shapes, sizes, and color. You find perennial color in meadows too.



While shrinking the lawn you might want to add some paver paths leading to a place of interest in the garden; or you may wish to expand the

herb garden or the vegetable garden. Be sure to incorporate a place to compost.

This type of garden also creates a natural balance of beneficial insect activity, eliminating the



need for insecticides. It invites butterflies and hummingbirds too. A water element will hydrate your friendly wildlife while adding a peaceful

cooling element to the landscape. There are lots of resources for sustainable landscaping. Start at the Nursery and have fun.



BULLETIN

Sept. 6: Labor Day (closed). Enjoy the holiday!

Sept. 14 – Oct. 4: 20% off sale! All plants in stock, 1 gallon or larger (does not include special orders or items already discounted).

Sept. 11 & 13 Fall Veggie Gardening seminar at 9:00 am with Tomato Tasting after (11th only)

Sept 25 & 27: Fall Veggie Gardening seminar (in case you missed it) at 10:00 am

October 10: Pumpkin and Squash Contest with local Apple Tasting

Oct. 21 – Oct. 25: Wholesale Weekend! You will receive your invitation in the mail. Bring it in to receive your discount (does not include special orders or items already discounted).

Nov. 25: Thanksgiving (closed). Have a nice turkey day!

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