

BEST PRACTICES



Less Grass, Less Stress for You & the Planet

Fall is here and it is time to tuck-in your yard for a winter nap! Before you get started, take a minute to think about all the time and money you spent mowing, watering and maintaining your lawn during spring and summer. You might get the notion to downsize or lose the lawn entirely. Imagine a yard with big planting beds bursting with beautiful native plants for pollinators, or a large garden filled with delicious veggies!

If you are concerned about climate change, clean water and water conservation, eliminating or reducing your lawn is the right choice. Here's why:

- When it rains, chemicals, pesticides and nutrients from lawn fertilizers are carried to our waterways, exposing children, pets and wildlife to harmful chemicals.
- The EPA estimates 40 to 60 percent of nitrogen from fertilizers ends up in surface and groundwater.
- Grass is thirsty. Americans use about 7 billion gallons of water a day, a third of all residential water consumption is for lawns.
- Despite the time and resources needed to maintain lawns, they provide no habitat for bees, butterflies, birds or other native wildlife.
- Exhaust emissions and fine particulates from gasoline-powered lawn and garden equipment can cause adverse health effects. These include cardiovascular disease, stroke, respiratory disease, cancer, neurological conditions, premature death, and effects on prenatal development.
- For each ton of nitrogen created to make lawn fertilizer, four to six tons of carbon are added to the atmosphere.
- EPA data shows that by mowing our lawns, Americans use 800 million gallons of gasoline and spill an additional 17 million gallons. Burning all this gas releases 16 billion tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere, contributing to climate change.

Keeping some of your lawn? You can lower your lawn's environmental footprint by following these recommended actions:

- Use a push or electric powered lawn mower.
- Mulch mow and leave clippings on your lawn. Lawn clippings add nutrients to your soil rather than using fertilizers made from fossil fuels.



- When needed, use organic slow-release fertilizer. This will help build soil health and keep nutrients from running off into waterways.
- Let your lawn go golden in summer or water only 1" per week slowly, when it's cool outside.
- Mow high. Long grass blades help soil hold onto more moisture.
- Compost yard trimmings to create a natural source of nutrients for flower and vegetable gardens.

Not sure how to get rid of your lawn? You can do it all at once or chip away at it gradually, increasing the size of your garden and planting beds each year. Dedicate a few of the hours you might normally spend caring for your lawn to planting native grasses, shrubs, trees, flowers and food. Stream Team has some great instructions on how to downsize your lawn and what replacement plants to choose.

To learn more about natural yard care, visit **streamteam.info/yard-care-reference-library**.

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