

Groundcovers - An Alternative to Lawns

A lush, green lawn may be the goal of many homeowners, but maintaining that lawn is expensive, time consuming, and has a huge, negative impact on the environment. Fertilizers and herbicides used to control pests and diseases may cause health problems for our children or pets. Many towns have issued watering restrictions, and turf grass is the largest consumer of water in the landscape.

Some homeowners have difficulty growing grass. They may have too much shade in their yard or live in a sandy seashore community. Their property may be sloped or poorly drained. The good news is that there are many alternatives to turf grass that are beautiful, hardy, and once established, much easier to maintain.

There are a wide variety of groundcovers available to suit every type of landscape. A groundcover is a spreading plant that is less than 18" tall. Many groundcovers have flowers or berries, as well as colorful foliage. They will add interest, texture and color to your hard. You can combine several different groundcovers to create a beautiful landscape instead of having a boring expanse of green lawn.

Most groundcovers require little fertilization and no supplemental watering once established. Choose plants that will fit your light requirements, either sun or shade, and you will have very few problems with pests or diseases.

Groundcovers will spread and many grow quickly – which can be a blessing or a curse. A few plants may be all you need to cover a large area, and this is cost effective. If your property is small, however, be sure to select varieties that are slower growing or they could easily outgrow their space.

Groundcovers for sun

armeria	creeping juniper	liriope	thyme
candytuft	dianthus	phlox subulata	wooly yarrow
cotoneaster	lambs ear	carpet roses	

Groundcovers for shade

ajuga	epimedium	native ginger	tiarella
cranesbill	geranium	hosta	periwinkle
daylily	ivy	sweet woodruff	plumbago

Consider eliminating, or at least lessening, the amount of high maintenance grass in your yard by adding several of these interesting and attractive groundcovers to your landscape.

Checklist for September

- ✓ Continue treating rose diseases and dispose of all debris. To ensure resistance to winter damage, allow the last flowers to set seeds (hips).
- ✓ Sow cool season vegetables: lettuce, spinach and radishes.
- ✓ Divide and transplant bearded iris.
- ✓ Ensure plants are pest-free before returning them indoors.
- ✓ Place poinsettia in a spot where it gets only natural light – no night light on September 20.
- ✓ Divide spring-blooming perennials.
- ✓ Dig up and cure (store) gladiola corms when foliage turns brown.
- ✓ Now is the best time for total lawn renovation. See Rutgers Fact Sheet FS633 “Fertilizing the Home Garden” for additional information.
- ✓ Check for your Fall Ocean County Household Hazardous Waste Day schedule online at www.co.ocean.nj.us/recycle to dispose of pesticides and other waste or call (732) 506-5047.

The summer's last generation of monarchs is not sexually mature at emergence. In September and October, those butterflies from east of the Rockies migrate south to Mexico where they hibernate; those from west of the Rockies migrate to Southern California.