



LAWN SUBSTITUTES

Lawn (turfgrass) is appropriate for areas that receive heavy traffic or aggressive play by pets and children. However, turfgrass is frequently planted in areas that are difficult (if not impossible) to water and maintain. These challenging areas are usually narrow, steep, shady, or extremely hot and sunny. Areas not suitable for turfgrass can be converted to a lawn substitute or groundcover.

GROUNDCOVERS

A well-chosen groundcover can provide the same advantages as lawn without high maintenance and water requirements. Groundcovers provide cooling for buildings, year-round color, choke out weeds, and spread by themselves. Evergreen groundcovers need the least amount of maintenance and have color and texture during all the seasons. Groundcover selection is based on finding the right plant for the existing conditions of sun, shade, drought or moisture.

WILDFLOWERS & BUNCHGRASSES

Adding wildflowers to your site is another way to change difficult planting areas to attractive features in your landscape. Bunchgrasses, sometimes called “dryland grasses”, hardy to at least USDA zone 6 can survive on 17 inches of annual precipitation or less. They survive our Inland Northwest climatic conditions by going dormant (not dying) during winter and again during the hot dry months in summer. When dormant, bunchgrasses turn yellow or tan in color. Between times of dormancy they are green. Before their summer dormancy, un-mown bunchgrasses will produce seeds on stalks that are taller than the grass blades and provide a stunning visual display.

Native or drought-tolerant plant suggestions are available at your local County Extension Master Gardener clinic, online, or at local nurseries.