Soil Solarization for Killing Lawns and Landscapes

How to solarize soil and kill your lawn

Mow the lawn very, short. The surface should be as smooth as possible. Water thoroughly the area to be solarized, wet soil heats more quickly than dry soil. Cover the lawn with clear plastic, it is most effective for Solarization, as the heating rays from the sun will pass through the sheet and be trapped to heat the soil below. Spread the plastic so it is in contact with the soil surface, and leave as little air space as possible. Bury the plastic at the edges with soil from a trench around the perimeter. If the area is too large for one sheet, use enough sheets of plastic to cover. Overlap the seams 12" and cover the seams with soil or brick etc. Anchor the edges of the plastic with soil or brick etc., or you can dig up the perimeter and place the soil back on top of the edge. Place a few shovels of soil round on the plastic in the interior of the plastic. Or extend the plastic six to eight inches beyond the edges of the grass. And cover with soil or rock brick etc. Solarize for 6- 8 weeks unless the weather is hot 90-100+ degrees for at least 5-6 weeks and the temperature is over 103 degrees for at least three days in a row, usually June- Sept.

Solarize raised beds, perennial beds, and weed-infested fields, slopes to kill weeds, pests, and pathogens. Make the surface flat for the plastic to lie tight against the soil.

The lawn will turn from green to yellow, then to straw brown. Check to see if the lawn is dead with a hand trowel if it is brown and crumbly, the lawn is dead. When the lawn is dead, remove and recycle the plastic. Using a flat shovel, remove the dead lawn for disposal. If the lawn is to become planting bed, just treat the dead stuff as compost. Turn it over or plant into or mound soil atop it. Remove any old irrigation lines you don't plan on using or consider putting in drip or low flow irrigation, if you continue a need to irrigate

Very useful website on this subject: UC IPM web site
http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74145.html

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