



Drought Tolerant Landscaping *Part Four of a Four Part Series*



Taking out your lawn or just part of your lawn and replacing it with drought tolerant landscaping is a wise, money-saving, and environmentally sound decision. The first step is to remove your lawn. There's a few different ways you can do this.

One way to remove your lawn is herbicides. This is not highly recommended because it can be a very expensive method and the herbicides could end up in your drinking water.

Physical removal is the quickest method. You can cut the sod into strips with a sod cutter, rolling the strips up, and either taking them away or turning them over and letting them compost in place. To compost in place cover sod with a layer of newspaper (6-10 sheets thick, and overlapping) and 4-6 inches of compost, and lastly with 3-4 inches of mulch to decompose the sod, to create good soil, and prevent grass from regrowing. Physical removal can also be done in a small area with just a flat shovel, but this is very labor intensive. Physical removal is not an option for Bermuda grass though. The roots of Bermuda grass are too deep for physical removal. Solarization is recommended in this case.

Solarization should be done as spring is turning into summer. Cut the grass as short as possible and water well. Cover with large rolls of sturdy black polyethylene plastic held in place by rocks or stakes. Make sure it is airtight. When done properly the top 6 inches of soil will heat up to as high as 140°F, depending on location. Leave in place for about 4-8 weeks, until grass is dead. Remove the plastic, and leave the dead grass to compost in place. This must be done in hot weather. This is a much easier method, but takes quite a while.

Sheet composting is another method of lawn removal. For sheet composting, cut the grass as short as possible. Cover the entire area with cardboard or newspaper (10-12 layers thick), overlapping the edges a good deal. Make sure no sunlight can get through this cover. Water paper, cover with a layer of compost, then mulch at least four inches thick. You can scatter wildflower seeds in the compost if you wish, or you can cut holes in the paper to plant individual plants, or wait until the paper has decomposed and dig planting holes for your new plants. This method adds organic matter to soil, requires minimal labor, and does not require removal and disposal of turf. It also takes a fairly long time, and is not practical on steep slopes.