

The lawn has to go.

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Thank you, Kathy for deciding to remove your lawn during this difficult drought year. You might know that lawns typically use 50% more water than drought tolerant plantings. One option is solarization. You need a clear heavy duty plastic tarp that will cover the lawn. The edges need to be buried in the soil. During the summer months, temperatures up to 140 °F can develop, killing not only your lawn but also any weed seeds. Another great benefit is that many soil born pathogen cannot survive these temperatures. Studies have shown that plants grown in solarized soil grow faster and stronger. The increased rate of breakdown of organic material (your lawn) facilitates the release of many soluble nutrients like nitrogen, potassium and calcium. Expect good solarization results in 6 weeks.

If you want to replant the area with drought resistant perennials during the fall (the best time to save water and ensure a good start of the new plants), the next method might be more suitable. Cut the lawn as short as your mower allows. Use a spading fork to aerate and improve drainage. Cover the entire lawn, overlapping the material generously with any of the following: thick cardboard; burlap sacks, or newspaper at least 2 inches thick. In a non-drought year, you would wet this layer using your irrigation system. But because we need to save water, skip this step or use your grey water, one bucket at a time. The next layer calls for some nitrogen rich material. You can recycle your cut lawn clippings from step one.. Then in the fall, the lawn should be completely composted and you can plant into your new mulch . The last layer in this modified layered composting method is a landscape material that you want to keep permanently in this area. Woodchips come in different sizes and colors. Use gorilla mulch or stones if you do not want to landscape.