



Turf Grass Alternatives

Lawn Alternative	Light and Water Requirements S/Psh = Full Sun to part shade	Traffic Tolerance	Wildlife Value	Native Range	Growth Habit	Mature Height	Season Type	Best Planting Time
UC Verde Buffalo Grass	Sun min 6 hrs/day H2O low, 25-50% of turf grass water requirements	Medium. Not suited for heavy traffic	N/A	Hybrid, developed by UC, suited for CA conditions	Low and dense turf	4-6"	Warm season with occasional watering	Spring-summer
CA Native Grass Mix	S/Psh. H2O Low once established. Seeds need irrigation for 4-6 weeks, unless planted during times with sufficient rain	Medium (e.g. golf-course roughs)	Medium	Coastal, valley, and foothill CA	Deep roots, height varies	Up to 36" without mowing	Summer dormant w/o irrigation	Seed in Sept. through April
Blue Grama Grass (<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>)	S/Psh. H2O 10-30% of turf grass water requirements. Water 1-2x/month once established, or less, if conditions allow.	Can stand some traffic, no soccer practice	Variety of birds and insects	Canada to Mexico, arid mountains in California's San Bernardino and San Diego Counties.	Deep roots, upright; clumping, sod-forming. If densely seeded, can be used as lawn	0.5- 2 ft h.x w. without mowing.	Warm season, goes summer-dormant w/o periodic irrigation	Seed in warm (65-70 degree) weather, late spring or fall.
Molate Creeping Red Fescue	S/Psh. H2O: More drought-tolerant than regular fescue	Can stand some traffic, but no football practice	Wildlife cover	Bay Area	Upright, green throughout the year w/some summer water	Tallest fescue at 3 ft. if not mowed, deep roots	Perennial	Seed in wet season
Rhizomatous tall fescue (RTF)	Sun min 6 hrs/day. H2O >70% of regular turf grasses; water deeply 1-2	Foot traffic, play, children and pets	No noted contribution to wildlife	Europe	Lateral rhizomes, deep roots to 6' once established.	3.5-4" Mow at 3" for moisture and grub control.	Cool season. Fairly cold and heat tolerant,	Plant sod any time, best in spring or fall.

	x/week during summer							
CA Meadow Sedge (<i>Carex pansa</i>)	S/Psh. H2O Low. 10-30% of standard turf grass. Water 1-2x/month once established.	Walkable , some play	Native wildlife cover and habitat, butterflies, songbirds (seeds)	West Coast from BC to Mexico	Floppy w/o mowing. Lateral rhizomes and deep roots.	6-12", spreading. For lawn, mow 2-3x/year	Cool-season but can stay green with occasional summer water	Plant plugs in fall, winter or spring
Clustered Field Sedge (<i>Carex praegracilis</i>)	S/Psh. H2O Low. 10-30% of standard turf grass. Water 1-2x/month once established.	Walkable , can handle play	Native wildlife cover and habitat, butterflies, songbirds (seeds)	Throughout U.S., except Southeast	Floppy w/o mowing. Lateral rhizomes and deep roots. Dense mat crowds out weeds. Pest free.	Taller than C. pansa (1-3 ft.)	Cool-season	Plugs in winter or spring (seeds germinate unevenly)
Kurapia	S/Psh. H2O Low, 10-30% of std. turf requirements once established (2 irrigations in the dry season)	Walkable , but no football	Insects, if left to bloom	Japan	0.5-2'	Floppy up to 3 ft. with flowers	Perennial with supplement summer water	Plugs or sod in April-June
Silver Carpet (<i>Dymondia margaritae</i>)	S/Psh. H2O: Drought and heat-tolerant, but needs 1-2" water per month in the summer	Can stand heavy traffic	Insects, if left to bloom	South Africa	Low groundcover	Up to 3" tall and 12" wide, spreads slowly	Cool season, heat tolerant	Plant plugs or flats in the wet-season

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