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Decreasing lawn area has many benefits, such as increasing habitat for wildlife, less maintenance and opportunities for various landscape creativity.

Shrinking your lawn can be an upgrade

Q **uestion:** Our two-acre property is mostly devoted to grass and we are tired of maintaining it. We would like to drastically decrease the lawn area, but still want to work in our yard. Any suggestions for us that aren't too drastic? I don't want to rip it all out.



Margo Roten
Ask a Master Gardener

All of that AND less lawn maintenance!

Consider your hobbies and interests. If you enjoy reading, would you like a nice space in the yard under a shady tree to enjoy a good book, a place to practice yoga or relax in a hammock?

Maybe you could use a bigger patio or set up space for a bocce ball court or horseshoe pits?

If you have grandchildren that are nearby, would they enjoy an area to play in that is just for them – a small sandbox, swing or something that speaks to their interests?

A wildflower meadow or letting part of your yard revert to its natural



A decorative path and cozy outdoor seating provide new life to a landscape.

landscape could be beautiful. All of the above require much less care than a large lawn.

Survey your property to decide which areas will be done first. Are there any areas where the grass doesn't grow well anyway, a precariously steep area that you hate to mow or an area that is no longer serving a purpose? These are excellent places to start.

Decide on your grass removal method. My first suggestion involves removing the grass completely. This is the quickest and most labor-intensive. It requires you to cut the unwanted sod using

a shovel or a sod cutter, roll it up and dispose of it. Afterward, put in any plantings you desire, layer with newspapers and 3-4 inches of mulch. Ta da! You are done!

However, since you have indicated that you don't want to rip it all out, you may want to consider one of the following options not involving grass removal.

The next two methods involve covering the grass. The first is sheet composting, but this method takes four to six months until you plant. Cover the removal area with 3-4 inches of grass clippings, then place your

compostable weed barrier (cardboard, paper or black and white newsprint). On the cardboard, place 3-4 inches of garden trimmings (weed-free), followed by compost, then mulch. Water occasionally. These layers will break down to provide nourishment to your plantings. When ready, just plant through the layers.

The next covering method is similar but quicker and allows you to plant right after layering. Put down cardboard and water it thoroughly. Layer clippings, then compost followed by a top layer of 3-4 inches of mulch. Mark any sprinklers,

plants or objects not to be covered. Cut small holes into the cardboard if you are adding new plants at this time or are surrounding established ones.

There are infinite possibilities to transform your landscape by replacing lawn with new living spaces that add interest, utility and cut down on all those man-hours of mowing, fertilizing and watering.

Do you have a gardening question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners via email at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, by phone at 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg.

A **answer:** Decreasing your lawn area results in many benefits. Here's a few to consider:

- Increasing habitat for wildlife
- Using less pesticides thereby decreasing runoff to rivers
- Using less water
- Opening space for the possibility of growing fruit trees and vegetables for your family's consumption as well as cut flowers for the house
- A more beautiful landscape
- Opening up more room for entertainment, play and fun