



Nancy and Pierre Moitrier

Honey, I Shrunk the Lawn!

With respect for the widespread ecological changes in weather patterns, it's time to reconsider the plants we are growing. Fall is a great time to begin transforming your landscape into a more sustainable garden that requires less work. Start with the neediest plant on your property: the lawn.

WHY IS AN ABUNDANCE OF TURF UNFAVORABLE?

- Turf requires mowing on a weekly basis, which results in exorbitant amounts of CO₂ emissions.
- A fescue lawn requires a minimum of 1 inch of water per week.
- Traditional lawns require the application of chemicals for optimal performance.
- Pure turf is a monoculture that provides few ecological benefits.
- Trees and turf are not compatible. They compete for water, light, and nutrients.

WHAT ARE THE AESTHETIC AND CULTURAL BENEFITS OF MINIMIZING TURF AREAS?

- Defining your turf boundaries with a clean and discernible shape will cause the lawn to become a contrasting negative space and will elegantly set off adjacent plantings.
- The process of reducing the lawn provides the opportunity to “sculpt” the land by creating planting berms that can direct water flow on or around your property. Fall is the perfect time to correct drainage issues.
- Diversity of flora invites a diversity of fauna into the garden, creating a more balanced ecosystem.

FROM MINIMAL CHANGES TO GRANDIOSE PROJECTS, FOLLOW THESE SUGGESTIONS TO MINIMIZE TURF AREAS:

- Expand your foundation bed. From a design standpoint, the bed should extend outward as far as the house is tall.
- Connect floating islands of shrubs or trees to create one contiguous bed with grand, sweeping curves.
- Enlarge existing beds as plants grow as opposed to pruning shrubs to stay within turf boundaries.
- Plant steep, difficult-to-mow areas. Create visual continuity by planting like plants in large drifts.
- Transform excessively wet areas of your turf into rain gardens and plant moisture-loving plants.
- Replace lawn on the periphery of the property with garden beds which will be more attractive from inside your home looking out.
- Create a meadow and attract beneficial insects to your property. Meadows add excitement with their dynamic growth and constant bloom; they also provide food for our feathered friends.
- Plant native trees and shrubs—create a forest.
- Plant no-mow grass alternatives. Replace your current lawn with no-mow turf types such as common wood sedge (*Carex blanda*), white-tinged sedge (*Carex albicans*), or Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*), among others. 🌱

NANCY AND PIERRE MOITRIER operate *Designs for Greener Gardens*, a boutique gardening company that specializes in designing, creating, developing, and maintaining distinctive gardens of all styles. Pierre hails from France and brings the charm of the Old World to their garden creations. Nancy's 40 years of gardening experience combined with her design knowledge and innate artistic eye add a superior dimension to their garden projects. Follow *Designs for Greener Gardens* on Facebook.

