



# Re-Wilding Your Lawn

## INTRODUCTION

Traditional grass lawns are resource intensive and provide little ecological value to our landscapes. Alternatively, native plants are adapted to our soil and climate, so they require less maintenance and fewer resources to thrive. By removing your lawn and replacing it with native plants you are protecting and restoring biodiversity, improving air and water quality, and providing wildlife with quality food and shelter.

This guide is intended to get you started on your re-wilding project by providing you with an overview of the process.

### STEP 1

#### ASSESS YOUR SITE

Take note of the following: sunny vs. shady areas, soil type, existing plants, presence of invasive species, slope and drainage, deer browse pressure, and square footage.

Consider your goals. Are you looking to reduce maintenance and irrigation use? Increase pollinator habitat?

Protect your home from fire? These things will inform design and species selection.

Contact your municipality and HOA to ask about pertinent ordinances and restrictions.

**Call 811 to learn the location of any utility lines at your site.**

### STEP 2

#### CREATE A SITE PLAN

Work large to small when creating your site plan.

- Decide placement of paths and walkways.
- Determine appropriate species and location for trees.
- Determine appropriate species and location for shrubs.
- Determine appropriate species and location for forbs, grasses and groundcovers.

Choosing the correct species for your site is key to the long-term success of your planting. Refer to our plant selection guides to help you choose species that align with your goals. Or consider purchasing one of our plant kits!



Water Wise Kit



## STEP 3

## PREPARE YOUR SITE

Now it is time to kill the turf. There are multiple strategies to remove your lawn, your site assessment will help you determine which strategy is appropriate for your site.

### Option 1: Sod Cutting/ Tilling

Sod cutting involves physically removing the turf by digging. This can be done by hand with a shovel or with specialized equipment.

#### Pros:

- There is no waiting. Planting can begin as soon as the digging is done.
- Machine sod cutting is good for large projects.

#### Cons:

- The top layer of soil will be lost. It may be necessary to amend your soil to replace important nutrients and organisms.
- Open soil is susceptible to weed encroachment. Mulching is recommended to reduce risk.
- Not ideal for patchy, rocky, or degraded lawns.

### Option 2: Sheet Mulching

Sheet Mulching is the process of laying down cardboard or over the lawn and layering with compost and/or mulch. We recommend beginning this process in the fall, so the site will be ready for spring planting the following year.

1. Cut grass as short as possible.
2. Lay cardboard down in overlapping layers (6"-12" overlap).
3. Wet down the cardboard very thoroughly.
4. Cover cardboard with a 3" layer of compost and Mulch (4"-6").
5. Wait 6-8 months until the turf has died and is beginning to decompose.

## Sheet Mulching cont.

#### Pros:

- Passive process is lower effort than digging.
- Nothing is being removed from your landscape, the grass and cardboard will compost under the mulch, so the process is low waste AND you are improving your soil.

#### Cons:

- The process is slow, 6-8 months is needed, and it is recommended to begin in the fall.
- Ineffective on steep slopes.
- Certain weeds can survive, resulting in the need for additional maintenance.

### Option 3: Herbicide Application

Choose a 'non-selective' herbicide such as glyphosate. These herbicides kill both broadleaf weeds and grasses and have a very short residual time.

***Always read the label of any herbicide you use and carefully follow all instructions.***

#### Pros:

- Minimal waiting. Planting can begin in as little 1 day depending on the herbicide used.
- Good for areas with severe weed infestation.
- Effective on areas with objects that prevent the use of tools and equipment.

#### Cons:

- Improper handling of herbicides can negatively impact the health of people, pets, soil, and waterways.

*Although the use of herbicides is not typically encouraged at CNP, we acknowledge that, in specific circumstances—such as the removal of turfgrass lawns lacking ecological value—the judicious and targeted application of herbicides may be appropriate.*

## STEP 4

## INSTALLATION

- Planting should be done during the cool morning or evening hours.
- Water plants thoroughly before removing from containers.
- Dig holes at least as deep as the root-mass and twice as wide. If soil quality is poor, consider amending by blending in an organic compost.
- Hold the plant upright in the hole with the root collar level with the soil line. Roots should be pointed straight down.
- Backfill around plant, working fingers into the soil to eliminate air pockets.
- Water deeply at the base of the plant.

## STEP 5

## MAINTENANCE

### Watering

New plantings will need to be watered regularly until the plants become established. Your project may also need supplemental water during its first several summers. Watch for signs of stress, water deeply when you see drooping leaves or dulling colors.

### Weed Management

Your project is at the highest risk for weed encroachment during the first few years while your native plants are still small. Controlling weeds during this time is necessary for the long-term health of your project. Be prepared to pull or spot kill weeds.

### Seasonal maintenance

We recommend leaving fallen leaves and standing dead through the winter to provide habitat for hibernating insects and forage for birds.

View this plant selection guide using your phone:

