



Groundcovers and Freedom Lawns

Did you know most lawns are over-watered? In some areas of Florida, up to 70% of the water usage is spent on lawn irrigation (IFAS). Over-watering washes chemicals from lawns and streets into our waterways, polluting our drinking water and harming marine life. If you irrigate your lawn, consider reducing it to only as needed or cutting it off and creating a Freedom Lawn!

Freedom Lawn: A 'lawn' area **free** of irrigation, fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals. Freedom lawns are usually taller, mowed less, and embrace biodiversity. They offer various flowers and textures through the seasons in an otherwise turf grass only area. Freedom Lawns offer food and shelter resources for pollinators and other insects. They are a sustainable solution to support biodiversity in developed areas.

Converting your lawn into a Freedom Lawn can be as simple as cutting off lawn sprinklers, ending chemical applications, and reducing mowing. Native groundcovers can be added into lawn areas and wildflower seeds can be scattered in corners.

Don't kill your entire lawn, instead shrink it and add natives in! Add native landscaping beds to reduce turf areas. Native groundcovers can be added into managed beds, bare spots, or mixed into lawns.

Lawns have their place in the landscape. Rather than trying to fully remove them or establish a uniform groundcover, we've found that embracing a mix of species can save time, money, and pollinator resources. Just mow what grows! Lawn areas can be taller than 2 inches and still look maintained.

Large lawn conversions often need experience, planning, and oversight from a native landscaping professional to avoid costly errors. If considering a DIY lawn conversion, start in a small area to experiment with the seed bank and become familiar with the process before taking on a large-scale project.

If you have a new development, contact a native landscaping professional before sod is installed to talk about incorporating native groundcovers. If you want turf grass installed, we recommend **Centipede** for drier areas with full sun and **St. Augustine** for areas with more soil moisture and shade. Both Centipede and St. Augustine do not need mowing after establishment. St. Augustine is also a butterfly host plant native to Florida!

Avoid having Zoysia sod installed. The rhizomes are very deep and sharp. It can out compete other plants in the landscape and make establishing native plants difficult.

Homeowners have the right to decide what type of sod is installed in their landscape.

Considerations for Developing a Freedom Lawn:

- **Timeline and Budget:** Is this a DIY project at a relaxed pace or a large scale project that needs oversight from a professional to complete quickly?
- **Irrigation and Maintenance:** Native plants may need temporary watering to establish. Will the area be hand watered or have a temporary sprinkler or irrigation lines?
- **Impact Resistance:** Does the area need to handle foot traffic from people or pets? Will it need to handle sport activity or children's play areas?
- **Maintenance and Long-term Care:** Maintenance may decrease over time as the area fills in and stabilizes, but it will still require some upkeep. Hand weeding for the establishment period may be necessary depending on the existing seed bank and project goals.

Tips for Cultivating a Freedom Lawn:

- **Have an Open Mind:** Freedom lawns look different from traditional monoculture lawns. They can be different heights, textures, and flowering colors. Embrace the differences of your Freedom Lawn and the environmental benefits of them.
- **Know what Grows:** Use [iNaturalist](#) to identify what naturally comes up from the seed bank and if it has a place in your Freedom Lawn. The more acceptance of what is already there, the lower the costs and efforts for removal and replacement. Non-native species can play a role in Freedom Lawns as long as they are not considered invasive. Identify plants before pulling to avoid removing wild native groundcovers that may already exist in your yard.
- **Start Small:** Starting in a smaller area can help build confidence and spread out the work.
- **Have a Plan:** Having a plan can save you from common errors that may be time consuming to remedy. Consider consulting with a native landscaping professional before you begin a lawn-conversion project.
- **Mowing:** Mowing groundcovers can help them fill in and reduce weed pressure as they establish. Once your native groundcover is established, mowing can decrease to as little as yearly depending on the circumstances.
- **Custom Grow:** We recommend smaller plants if you are trying to cover a large area. We can custom grow large quantities and offer a bulk discount. We need advance notice for custom grow projects, so please reach out early to give us ample time. We recommend reaching out for a custom grow in the spring or early summer for a fall planting.
- **Planting Time:** Fall through spring planting is recommended unless the area is wet or has good irrigation for summer establishment.

- **String Trimming:** Or weed wacking can be used to selectively trim areas when mowing the entire area isn't needed. Selectively string trimming or mowing pathways and street edges while letting other areas grow taller can be a good way to show that a Freedom Lawn is intentional and maintained. String trimming allows a higher level of control of what is being cut.
- **Informational yard signs** and speaking with your neighbors about your native landscaping is a fantastic way to educate others about the benefits of your Freedom Lawn.

Check out our list of Groundcovers and Freedom Lawn Species that may work in your yard!

You may recognize some that are already naturally occurring on your property.

[Full Sun Groundcovers - Dry to Average Soil](#)

[Full Sun Groundcovers - Wet Soil](#)

[Part Sun to Shade Groundcovers - Dry Soil](#)

[Part Sun to Shade Groundcovers - Average to Wet Soil](#)