Native Lawns
Earth Friendly alternatives to traditional lawns
What are Native Lawns?

+ Native Lawns are one alternative to turf grass that promotes the use of native grasses and forbs, minimal disturbance, and no chemical use
+ Native Lawns recreate native meadows which provide habitat for native animal species – especially pollinators
+ Native Lawns differ based on climate and location – what's native and natural in California is different to Virginia!
Rethinking Beauty

Native and Natural does not have to mean unmanaged or unsightly
The roots of trees, shrubs and other plants are crucial for holding soil in place and for soaking up rainwater before it can run off the land. Allow fallen leaves to remain on the ground, where they will recycle nutrients back into the soil and provide rich habitat for salamanders, box turtles, birds and other wildlife species.

Group your landscape beds by placing shrubs adjacent to flowering perennials and by using groundcovers to fill all the spaces between the other plants. This creates a layered habitat for wildlife and also minimizes the amount of exposed mulch where weeds can invade.
Benefits to Natural Lawns

- Wildlife Habitat
- Soil Health
- Water Management
- Ecological Restoration
- Climate Resiliency
- Improved Air Quality
- Lower Labor Requirements
- Lower fertilizer needs
- Lower pesticide use
Wildflowers

There are hundreds of native wildflowers with commercial seed mixes available anywhere from a few ounces to 25+ pounds.

Linked later in the presentation

Specific flower choices should depend on the soils, sunlight, and drainage of your yard

The agricultural extension office can help you get the right mix for you

Here are some of our personal favorites
When planting for pollinators remember the 3 B's

- **BUGS**
- **BIRDS**
- **BATS**
Recommended Wildlife Grasses by DWR

Tall Grass Mixture - lbs. per acre
+ 1.5 lb. big bluestem
+ 1.5 lb. Indian grass
+ 1.0 lb. little bluestem
+ 0.5 lb. switchgrass
+ 1.0 lb. native forbs

Short Grass Mixture – lbs. per acre
+ 3.0 lb. little bluestem
+ 1.0 lb. sideoats grama
+ 0.5 lb. Indian grass
+ 1.0 lb. native forbs
Native Grass Options for more Traditional Lawns

https://www.plantnovanatives.org/native-grasses

- Recommends Sedges for most lawn replacement
- Sedges are short, thin-blade grasses that thrive in shady conditions

Appalachian Sedge Grass

Pennsylvania Sedge Grass
Transitioning from Turf to Native

- Test Soils
- Plan
- Remove Non-Natives – including grass
- Plant Natives
- Management
How to Remove Turf Grass

Best done in the Fall-Winter

Physical removal
- Remove the sod by cutting it into strips with a sod cutter, rolling the strips up, and either taking them away or turning them over and letting them decompose and recycle nutrients in place

Sheet Composting
- Cut the grass as short as possible. Cover the entire area with cardboard (either used boxes or purchased rolls) or newspaper (10-12 layers)

Seed native grasses & flowers come early spring
Management

Native Lawns require less overall management

Year 1:
  Mow 3-4 times over the summer to keep weeds from outcompeting grasses

Year 2:
  Mow once in early summer to encourage grasses to grow over weeds

Year 3+:
  Spring burn if possible – mow short once in spring if burning is not possible
Invasive Species Management

+ Invasive species will find their way in
  + Keep an eye out for any one species taking over
+ Remove manually through clippers and/or weeding
+ If invasive takeovers are severe, contact local foresters/conservationists to develop a management plan
Working within Ordinances & HOA's

- Aesthetics and Intentionality are key
  - Make things look like they were done on purpose
  - Focus on pollinator friendly native flowers
  - Create clearly defined garden beds
- Provide signage talking about Native Landscaping and Wildlife habitat
- Keep walkways and edges clear and tidy
Both have native plants – which one is more likely to be cited by a city?
Wildflower Seed Mixes

+ [https://www.createdbynature.com/products/virginiamix](https://www.createdbynature.com/products/virginiamix)


**Resources**

+ Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District  
  + [https://headwatersswcd.org/](https://headwatersswcd.org/)
+ Virginia Cooperative Extension  
  + [https://ext.vt.edu/](https://ext.vt.edu/)
+ Virginia Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
+ Virginia Master Naturalists  
+ Virginia Native Plant Society