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## It May Be Time to Rethink Our Lawns and Landscapes

Per the University of Maryland Agriculture Department, Maryland is located in a **climate transition zone which is not favorable for growing lawn grasses**. The zone is an area where temperate and subtropical climates meet. Cool-season turfgrasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass are adapted to temperate climates whereas warm-season grasses like zoysiagrass grow best in subtropical regions. Both cool- and warm-season turfgrasses can grow in Maryland, but our state's climate is not favorable for either group of grasses over the entire year. This makes it a constant challenge to try to maintain a healthy lawn.

**Turfgrasses are not native to Maryland.** The University of Maryland conducts research trials to evaluate turfgrass cultivars that will grow well in Maryland's transition zone climate. The results are published annually. A few common varieties are Rebel IV and V and Avenger II. Turf-type tall fescue is a cool-season grass that is recommended for most areas of Maryland. It needs a minimum of 4-6 hours of sun daily and requires regular maintenance to remain healthy. Soil testing, fertilization, mowing, aeration, and overseeding (in the Fall) are all essential practices that must be done on a regular basis to maintain a healthy lawn.

Even if the "right" type of seed or sod is chosen, creating the perfect lawn is expensive and time consuming. There are other viable options. They are environmentally friendly and self sustaining. Choose to let nature take the lead and relax.

- Moss- Do not try to amend the soil. Just let the moss spread freely under the trees or beside walkways etc. To change the Ph of the soil would require an ongoing effort and would likely be futile.
- Trees- Instead of struggling grass under the trees, plant groundcovers. One to try is Pachysandra or shade loving perennials like Hellebore or Carex .
- Expand the planting beds and lessen lawn space.
- Clover Lawn- If you have a spot in your landscape where you have a small area of under performing grass, replace it with a clover lawn. They're all the rage now and just beautiful.

Admittedly, it would be difficult to create a landscape without any grass; however, the percentage of a landscape dedicated to the lawn can be significantly reduced. This Fall, I will definitely enlarge some planting beds, underplant several trees with groundcover and view the moss as a net positive to the landscape. Oh, and after that, relax.



Ingrid Blanton's "clover lawn."