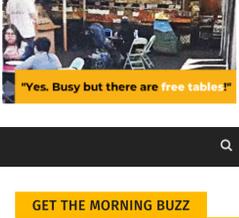
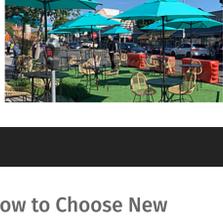




News from Larchmont Village, Hancock Park and the Greater Wilshire areas of Los Angeles.



## Lawn Replacement, Part 2: How to Choose New Plants

January 26, 2019 | Staff Writer | Leave a comment



A home in Fremont Place, with a drought-tolerant front yard, which was featured in the 2016 GWNC Drought-Tolerant Garden Tour

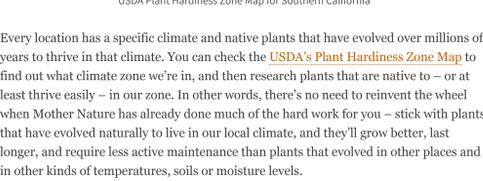
A while back, *Buzz* reader and local designer **Pascale Marill** sent us some great information on lawn replacement, the disadvantages of artificial turf as a replacement material, and how to move instead toward a well planned and more sustainable yard full of drought-tolerant plantings. Now that the new year is here, and people are starting to think about spring yard and garden projects, we've used Marill's information as the basis for two new stories on lawn replacement. **Part 1** focused on the inadvisability of replacing lawns with artificial turf...and in this **Part 2**, we show you how to plan and plant beautiful drought tolerant lawn alternatives.

So now that we've learned that **artificial turf is not really a great replacement for a traditional grass lawn**, what is better? We'd urge you to consider the wide variety of drought-tolerant and more native natural plants, which can provide a number of functional benefits, as well as an infinite variety of shapes, textures and colors. But which ones work best and how do you choose? Well, let's go back to the original goals:

1. Reduce water consumption
2. Reduce costs
3. Increase curb appeal

All of these things can be achieved if you pick the right plants, and plan your new "lawn" carefully. Here are some factors to consider:

### Climate



USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map for Southern California

Every location has a specific climate and native plants that have evolved over millions of years to thrive in that climate. You can check the **USDA's Plant Hardiness Zone Map** to find out what climate zone we're in, and then research plants that are native to – or at least thrive easily – in our zone. In other words, there's no need to reinvent the wheel when Mother Nature has already done much of the hard work for you – stick with plants that have evolved naturally to live in our local climate, and they'll grow better, last longer, and require less active maintenance than plants that evolved in other places and in other kinds of temperatures, soils or moisture levels.

### No Tilling



Be sure to consider the root structures of new plants.

Existing plant roots are a large part of the structure of the soil in your yard, so planting anything that requires large amounts of re-tilling can harm the soil's structure and the larger ecosystem. And this can lead to problems with erosion, lack of aeration and more. So choose new plants that don't necessarily require destroying the root systems of other nearby plants, which are already at work aerating and nurturing your soil.

### Earthworms



Photo from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

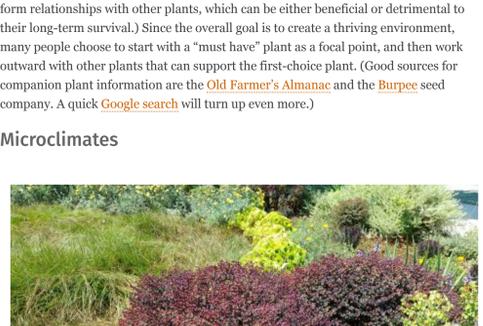
Worms are one of the most valuable "tools" a gardener can use. They're almost like garbage disposals for the soil – as they move through the ground, they ingest and decompose both living and dead organic matter through their digestive tracts, and as they move, they create tunnels filled with a mucous membrane to ease their travels. This creates air passages in the soil, and the mucous helps retain water in the tunnels as well. Worms also defecate, and the droppings (known as "worm tea," or "black gold") are extremely rich in nutrients and beneficial to the soil. An initial investment in some new squiggly friends will continue to pay dividends long after you introduce them.

### Companion Planting



Companion planting refers to the practice of locating specific plants close to others that naturally enhance their growth, or which can protect them from pests. (Yes, plants can form relationships with other plants, which can be either beneficial or detrimental to their long-term survival.) Since the overall goal is to create a thriving environment, many people choose to start with a "must have" plant as a focal point, and then work outward with other plants that can support the first-choice plant. (Good sources for companion plant information are the **Old Farmer's Almanac** and the **Burpee** seed company. A quick [Google search](#) will turn up even more.)

### Microclimates



The concept of "permaculture" (defined as "the development of agricultural ecosystems intended to be sustainable and self-sufficient") is based on an environment that contains eight layers of growth, starting with the basic fungal layer of the ecosystem, climbing up through root systems, other underground structures, groundcover, herbaceous plants, shrubs, the subcanopy of tree trunks and the overarching tree canopy. And planning both diversity and compatibility in each of these layers can help reduce the overall need and costs for things like water, pesticides, fungicides, herbicides and labor to keep everything growing well together.

### Clippings

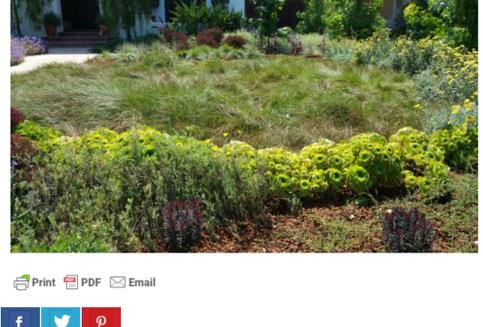


Finally, good news: plants are alive and grow. So if you have plants you like and that are thriving, you can often create more of them with clippings from an existing plant. Small clippings require the smallest amount of energy to regenerate, so it's usually better and faster to clip small. Also, using a root (or "cloning") gel, available at nurseries, will help protect the exposed area from harmful contaminants.

### One More Benefit

Now for an added bonus. While a well-planned garden can reduce water consumption, reduce costs and maintain (or even improve!) the curb appeal of your home, it can also strengthen the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. When we're gardening, and in direct contact with dirt, we are exposed to a soil microbe called **Mycobacterium vaccae**, which has been shown to trigger the production of serotonin and reduce anxiety in the brains of mice. In other words, there may be a good reason that many gardeners say playing in the dirt makes them happy.

So keep these things in mind as you consider alternatives for replacing your traditional grassy lawn. There are many benefits to doing so...and to just saying no to artificial turf!



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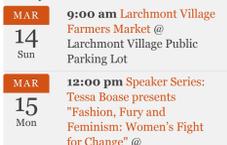
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- MAR 15 Mon** 12:00 pm Speaker Series: Tessa Boase presents "Fashion, Fury and Feminism: Women's Fight for Change" @
- MAR 15 Mon** 12:00 pm Japan Foundation: Music Mondays @ Online
- MAR 17 Wed** 1:00 pm Larchmont Village Farmers Market @ Larchmont Village Public Parking Lot
- MAR 17 Wed** 6:00 pm Miracle Mile HPOZ Board Meeting @ Online
- MAR 17 Wed** 7:00 pm Chighthouse Turn: The Twilight of Hollywood Park Race Track by Michele Asselin @ Online
- MAR 18 Thu** 5:00 pm Greater LA Homeless Count Town Hall @
- MAR 18 Thu** 7:00 pm Reading of Vacuum by Theatre Forty @
- MAR 21 Sun** 9:00 am Larchmont Village Farmers Market @ Larchmont Village Public Parking Lot
- MAR 22 Mon** 12:30 pm Japan Foundation: Music Mondays @ Online
- MAR 22 Mon** 7:00 pm GWNC Transportation Committee Meeting @ Online
- MAR 23 Tue** 6:30 pm GWNC Land Use Committee Meeting @ Online
- MAR 24 Wed** 1:00 pm Larchmont Village Farmers Market @ Larchmont Village Public Parking Lot
- MAR 25 Thu** 7:00 pm LA Women's Theatre Festival Gala @



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