



PREPARING YOUR SPACE FOR YOUR NATIVE LANDSCAPE

Spring is nearly here! Preparing your space for a native landscape will depend on the existing condition of your yard. Use the site-specific guides below to help craft your next steps. Like all new gardens, native habitats will require regular watering and maintenance during their establishment period.

SELECT YOUR EXISTING LAWN TYPE

HEALTHY TURF GRASS

Turf that has been well cared for and is predominantly weed free will simplify your transition into a native landscape. We recommend four methods for turf removal: sod cutting, spraying, hand digging, or sheet mulching. Read more about each of these options on the following page.

TURF GRASS WITH WEEDS

If your turf is predominantly weeds, you will have to prepare your space by hand weeding or by treating with a weed/grass killer. We recommend using an organic weed killer. Spray should only be used in preparation of the space, and not after your native habitat is installed.

MULCH & ROCKS

Remove the mulch or rocks. If the soil seems compacted add some airflow by aeration. Water the space for 45 minutes and observe it for a week, monitoring the weeds that germinate, then weed them out by hand. Repeat this step as needed. Give yourself about 45 minutes a day for three days this week.

DIRT PATCH

If you have a dirt space, water it 3 times a week for 45 minutes. If your soil is hydrophobic (water is running off the top of the area and not being absorbed into the soil) layer organic material on the soil surface including leaves, grass clippings and garden straw. Water it regularly, and pry the soil a bit to aerate it. Monitor weed growth and spray or hand weed for two weeks. When weeds have subsided the space is ready for plants.

GARDEN BED

If you are adding native species into an existing garden space just make some room. Remove any plants that haven't been thriving. Clear the area of leaf litter and weeds. The space is ready for planting.

SLOPED TURF

A sloped space may rule-out the use of a sod cutter depending on the degree. But fear not! Find other methods for removing turf on the following page.

TURF REMOVAL TECHNIQUES

There are many options for turf removal: sod cutting, spraying, sheet mulching, and hand digging are all viable methods. Read our quick how-to guide on each of these methods below.

SOD CUTTING

Rent a sod cutter from your favorite big tool rental company. You may need to rent it with a trailer. Watch YouTube videos, have friends or a trusted loved one help you, it's a big machine. After cutting, roll up the sod and either take it to A1 organics to be composted (they will charge you) or have a sod-loving neighbor take it. Plan on turf removal using a sod cutter taking about three days to complete for a standard Denver lawn.

Do NOT add compost, do NOT till, but DO water the area after you've removed your sod. Water it well, then watch it for about a week. Observe the weeds that germinate, then weed them out by hand. We recommend a circle hoe, soil knife, dandelion weeder or an old fashioned butter knife for this. Give yourself about 45 minutes a day for three days this week. You'll be able to plant and sow seed directly onto this area. **Do not use a sod cutter if you have exposed tree roots.**

SPRAYING

We recommend organic grass killers that are approved for organic gardening and are safe for use around people and pets. Sprays that contain citric acid and clove oil work well. They're systemic, meaning they will kill any plant they come into contact with. But they are safe for organic gardens and they are safe for pollinators. Do not spray while plants are flowering (for example, dandelions). Spray then leave the space for about two weeks, spot treating as you see fit in areas you may have missed or on stubborn weeds. Read directions carefully and follow the label! **The label is the law.**

After two weeks, hard rake the dead turf. If you have a lawn mower, mow the site a few times. Do not add compost, do not till, but DO water the section. Water it well, then watch it for about a week. Observe the weeds that germinate, then weed them out by hand. Repeat this step as needed. Give yourself about 45 minutes a day for three days this week. Now the site is ready. You'll be able to plant and sow seed directly onto this area. You will no longer need to spray the area after planting.

SHEET MULCHING

Collect enough cardboard to cover your space. Lay the cardboard flat over the turf, then cover the cardboard with 3 inches of wood mulch. Wait one year. Rake and remove the remaining mulch. You can rototill and rake out the site if you desire. Observe the weeds that germinate, then weed them out. We recommend a circle hoe, soil knife, dandelion weeder or a butter knife for this. Give yourself about 45 minutes a day for three days during this week. Now your site is ready. You'll be able to plant and sow seed directly onto this area.

HAND DIGGING

Hand dig. Grab a shovel and dig out the turf. Be patient and stretch, hand digging is hard work, but effective.

