It's time to get DIRTY! Let's get rid of some (or all) of that thirsty Kentucky Bluegrass Lawn

Did you know that your Kentucky Bluegrass lawn needs quite a lot of water for it to be healthy? Do you know how much water it actually needs? Look at the next page to find out. We think you'll be surprised!

There are several ways to remove lawn. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages. Here's the skinny-

The four best options:

1 **SOLARIZATION METHOD** • PAGE 12

What is it? : With this method you will cover the area of turf that you wish to kill with a black plastic sheet, creating a sun-powered sauna for your grass that is an uninhabitable place for it to live.

2 **SHEET COVERING METHOD** • PAGE 14

What is it? : This is a method of killing your turf by covering it with newspaper or cardboard and layering it with organic matter and mulch.

3 **PHYSICAL/MANUAL REMOVAL METHOD** • PAGE 16

What is it? : This is a method of physically removing your turf with a sod cutter or manually with a shovel and a little elbow grease.

4 **VINEGAR METHOD** • PAGE 18

What is it? : Vinegar is chemically safer and an excellent natural alternative to herbicides. With this method, you can kill your turf by applying vinegar to burn the plant.

Sample Water Savings Calculation

Photo Credit: Curtis Manning Design

Case Study: Removing 500sqft (25’ x 20’) of Kentucky Bluegrass lawn

Based on GreenCo’s recommended rate of water application in Colorado: *(based on historical rainfall averages)*

MAY: 1”/week
JUNE: 1.5”/week
JULY: 1.75”/week
AUGUST: 1.5”/week
SEPTEMBER: 1”/week
OCTOBER: .5”/week

= 29” OF WATER (PER YEAR)
in addition to our avgerage natural precipitation of 17” per year

= 1208 CUBIC FEET OF WATER (PER YEAR)
29” of water over 500sqft

= 9036 GALLONS OF WATER (PER YEAR)
for every 500sf lawn

Accounting for irrigation inefficiencies, there would be a savings of roughly **13,900 gallons of water each year**

REMOVING GRASS:
The Solarization Method

BENEFITS:

- Efficient
- Inexpensive
- Minimal labor needed
- Minimal environmental impact
- Dead grass is compostable (just leave it)
- Good for hot, sunny areas

CHALLENGES:

- Slower method (takes anywhere from 6 weeks to 1 year to fully kill your grass)
- Unsightly (may have the neighbors wondering when the painting is going to begin)
- Does not work in cool and/or shady areas

This method will only work for a hot and sunny area with high summer temperatures, so make sure that you select an area of turf that meets these requirements.

Do not attempt this method in areas that are shady or cool. It will not work!

FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1. Begin the Solarization process when spring is turning to summer. In Colorado, this is typically in May and early June.

2. Cut your grass as short as possible and water it well to prepare the turf for the process.

3. Cover the turf area that you wish to kill with a black polyethylene sheet (can be purchased at your local hardware or box store). Hold the sheet in place with heavy rocks or metal stakes. Make sure that the entire area is covered, and that it is airtight with no leaks or holes. The black plastic will act as a trap for the sun's radiant heat, and it will kill the grass by heating the top 6 inches of soil to about 140 degrees Fahrenheit.

4. You can use a soil thermometer or temperature probe to verify that the soil is heating as desired.

5. Leave in place for 4-8 weeks or until the grass is dead. It will take some time to kill the grass completely so don't get impatient here - it will only mean LOTS of weeding out Kentucky Bluegrass down the road!

   Note: The best way to tell if your bluegrass is dead is by watering a small area. If the lawn is dead nothing will grow in that area following irrigation. It's better o be safe than sorry with this - weeding Kentucky Bluegrass from a perennial garden is no fun!

6. Remove the plastic and leave the dead grass to compost.

REMOVING GRASS:

The Sheet Covering Method

BENEFITS:

- Efficient
- Inexpensive
- Minimal labor needed
- Minimal environmental impact
- Does not require turf removal
- Builds healthy soil

CHALLENGES:

- Slower method (takes about 6 months starting in the fall)
- Not practical for steep slopes
- Not practical for very large lawns

FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1. Start in the fall. Cut your grass as short as possible. This will ensure that the newspapers or cardboard lay flat in place.

2. Spread a 2 inch layer of compost that is high in nitrogen over the area to be replaced. Moisten well.

3. Cover the area of turf that you wish to kill with overlapping cardboard (used boxes will work just fine) or newspaper (10 to 12 sheets thick). Be sure to fully overlap in different directions and that no sunlight can get through, otherwise, the grass will find a way to survive!

4. Water the newspaper/cardboard. Be careful not to water too heavily, or the paper may start to tear. You just need it to be wet enough to stay in place and speed up the decomposition process.

5. Cover the newspaper/cardboard with another 2 inch layer of compost.

6. Top the compost with up to 18 inches of organic materials (grass clippings, leaves, farm manure, straw, food scraps). As time goes on, this pile of organic material will shrink in size, and by spring it will be ready for planting.

7. Top it all off with a 4 inch layer of mulch.

8. Water the bed occasionally to make for better decomposition & plant in the spring.

REMOVING GRASS:
The Manual Removing Method

BENEFITS:

- Fastest way to remove turf
- Removed sod makes great compost
- Leaves the majority of your soil intact
- You'll get a good workout
- Good for areas greater than 100 sqft

CHALLENGES:

- Labor intensive!
- Higher chance of turf regrowth sometimes
- The roots and grass clippings will resprout
- Will not work for very deeply rooted grasses
- May need to rent a sod cutter for larger areas

FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1. Based on the size of the turf area that you want to remove, decide whether you want to use a sod cutter or a square shovel/grape grubbing hoe. On average, two people can manually remove and haul away 100 square feet of turf in an hour. If you do not own a sod cutter, and that is the way that you would like to go, then rent one from your local tool supplier.

2. Sod cutter – Once you get your hands on a sod cutter, you will simply cut your sod into strips, roll them up, and get rid of them (or you can turn them upside-down and use them for compost).

   Shovel or hoe – The same steps apply: Dig it up and move it out! Make sure you dig deeply enough to remove the roots. The root depth will vary from yard to yard. Getting a friend or neighbor to help you out is highly encouraged.

3. Add some compost to your new garden area and get your garden ready for planting. You may want to consider Solarizing (see "Solarization" section – page 12) the area to make sure to kill any weeds that may remain in the soil.

REMOVING GRASS:

The Vinegar Method

BENEFITS:

- Eco-Friendly!
- Quick way to kill turf
- Leaves the majority of your soil intact
- Leaves the dead grass in place for erosion control

CHALLENGES:

- Expensive
- Works best in hot conditions
- Becomes ineffective when rain falls following application
- Lesser known method

FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1. Select a horticultural vinegar that is stronger than what can be found at the grocery store. Horticultural vinegar is 20% acetic acid and will act as a non-selective control of any herbacious plant or grass.

2. Water your lawn the day prior to vinegar application to stimulate growth and to insure that when applied, the vinegar will be absorbed into the grass.

3. Spray evenly onto the unwanted portion of turf until the grass looks damp. ***Spray the vinegar on a warm day - it should be at least 65 degrees and sunny. Also, do not apply near plants that you want to keep and use care if it is windy!***

4. Wait 2 to 4 days and reapply vinegar to any areas of grass that remain alive.

5. Leave the dead grass in place as a mulch until it decomposes into compost.

6. Dig holes for your new plantings.