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Givin' you the dirt: The grassless landscape

By SEAN JAMES N.P.D. PRESIDENT OF FERN RIDGE LANDSCAPING



The lawn mower is broken. The kids are pestering you about the environment. The neighbours got rid of theirs. You're tired of mowing every week, and the kid down the street charges a mint. Stupid grass won't grow under the Crimson King Maple. (Actually, the Maple is to blame...but never mind that now.)

All of these are excellent reasons for replacing the turf with low maintenance gardens. Guys are often attached to grass for some reason. The reason most used for keeping the grass is that gardens take such a lot of maintenance.

Let's think about that for a moment. If you spent an hour each week weeding the garden, the garden would be in such good shape that it wouldn't take nearly that long. Minutes - not hours.

So how do you get rid of the grass? Well the first step is to have a plan. The second step is to install the landscape in stages small enough to be maintained for the first year. The biggest mistake many people make is to install too large a chunk of land-

scape that they cannot maintain, and therefore it becomes a headache instead of a joy.

Groundcovers are the first secret of the grassless landscape. The best way to stop weeds from growing is to cover any visible soil. Some great groundcovers include Sweet Woodruff (also known as Bedstraw), Bigroot Geranium, Lamium, Hosta, Stonecrop and creeping Junipers, but there are many other great choices. You also need 'bones' such a Japanese Maple or Corkscrew Hazel for winter interest.

The second secret of the grassless landscape is mulching. A plethora of landscape mulches exists on the market. Unfortunately for the manufacturers of wood mulches, only two mulches are recommended and neither of them is wood. Wood mulches do their job too well, limiting perennial growth. Also the bacteria which breaks down organic matter requires nitrogen as part of its life cycle, and it gets only carbon from wood mulch. Therefore it depletes the nitrogen from the soil, thus depriving the

plants. (Sorry about the techno-speak.) The alternatives are cocoa mulch in a half-inch-thick layer or two inches of compost. Either should be topped up every year. Many people prefer the look of cocoa mulch. Both inhibit weed growth, retain soil moisture and make weeds easier to pull.

The final important secret of the grassless landscape is regular weeding for the first year. If all you do is pull the weeds as they come into bloom, you'll have almost no weeds next year. After that, just pull out any new weeds as they germinate. It couldn't be easier, and in the long run will take substantially less effort than mowing.

It is to be admitted that a grassless landscape requires a steeper learning curve, but you're lowering your long-term costs, making your neighbourhood much more beautiful and making the world a healthier place by limiting pesticide use. Incidentally, the increase in your property value should be reason enough to get rid of the lawn.

Shop, relax and be entertained at the Georgetown Farmers' Market

By KAREN BOOTHROYD

The Georgetown Farmers' Market is considered by farmers to be one of the most welcoming markets in this corner of Ontario. Every Saturday, starting on June 21, 7:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Old Georgetown's quaint Main Street is transformed into a bustling market. With up to 25 vendors offering a seasonal variety of vegetables, fruit, honey, organic meat,

flowers and baked goods - plus street performers providing entertainment - it's not surprising that this is an award-winning market. According to Dawn Falls, one of the Co-Chairs and the founding member of the Georgetown Farmers' Market, "This is a producer-based market: Everything the vendors make or grow themselves."

Old Georgetown has an abun-

dance of picturesque historical buildings and maintains an enchanting small-town feel. There are also charming bistros and sidewalk cafes to relax in and, of course, there's ice cream. Come experience the bees at the honey table, the rhythms of the drummers and the soothing harp music. Sip the market's own special blend of coffee. The market is a joyous event. Cooking demonstrations are one of the many highlights. These are held every two weeks starting on June 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Market chef, Deborah Palmer, works with seasonal ingredients provided by the vendors and hands out free samples and recipes.

A fun-filled way to get a taste of the market is The Village Festival held June 20 to 21. The festival kicks off the summer and the market. Arts and crafts vendors intermingle with the farmers' stalls. Buskers, jugglers and dancers entertain. For the children, pony rides, face painting and story time provide fun. If getting up before 5 a.m. is your thing, "The act of seeing the market set up and the sun rising over the historic McGibbon Hotel is vitalizing," says Ms. Falls enthusiastically.

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