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Garden design solutions: A GARDEN WITHOUT A LAWN?

by Ian McBain

Well, what a summer. With several heatwaves and weeks without rain, we have just experienced the reality of how our summers are likely to be for the foreseeable future. We have also seen the impact of hot and dry weather on our gardens, and particularly for our lawns. They will recover after a few weeks of rain, but why do we persist with grass if it can't cope with the changing climate?

Yes, I understand the desire for some grass as a play space for younger children, or if a garden is very large, but for smaller spaces I definitely think it is time to consider ditching the lawn. And, before we go any further, I am absolutely not advocating replacing our lawns with more paving or with artificial grass (which is extremely bad for the environment).

Here are three very good reasons to think about scrapping your lawn:

1. Lower maintenance
People often believe that lawns are low-maintenance, but is this actually true? If we factor in mowing, edging, and disposing of the clippings etc, then even a modest lawn can consume quite a lot of time and energy. Well-planned planting, on the other hand, can require very little regular attention.

2. More room for more plants
Removing a lawn can create more space for plants, which can mean more colour, texture and fragrance for us to enjoy. We can have deeper borders, which are often easier for designing planting that will look better across more of the year. It might also create space for a pond, for another tree, or possibly for a hammock or swing seat.



3. Better for wildlife
Most UK lawns are, to all intents and purposes, monocultures, and monocultures are rarely good for wildlife. If we want to encourage more wildlife (and countless studies have shown that we should), then we need to provide a variety of habitats and food sources. The easiest way to do this is to create more room for planting, and to have a greater variety of different types of plants. So, let's lose some (or all?) of our lawn and create more room for us to share with friendly wildlife.

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