

GROUNDCOVER INFO SHEET

Alternatives to Grass Lawns



GROUNDCOVER	BLOOM COLOUR	FORM	NOTES	PICTURES
FULL SUN				
Thyme <i>Thymus species</i>	Flower type and colour varies with species and cultivars (wooly thyme pictured)	Dense creeping mat, 3 to 6 inches, spreads 6 inches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -prefers well-drained light textured soil with low fertility, and will tolerate organic and clay soils if well-drained -aromatic foliage that can withstand moderate foot traffic -attracts beneficial insects 	
Chamomile <i>Anthemis nobilis</i>	White petals, a yellow centre	6 inches high, spreads 6 to 12 inches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -prefers full sun but will tolerate light shade -prefers well drained soil -aromatic foliage that is resilient to heavy foot traffic 	
Bearberry <i>Arcostaphylo species</i>	White to pinkish spring flowers, red fruit in the fall	Evergreen, 1 to 4 inches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -prefers full sun but will tolerate light shade -well-drained, acidic light-textured soil - will tolerate salt spray 	
Sea Thrift <i>Armeria maritima</i>	Pink flowers in the spring	4 inches without flowers, Semi-evergreen, up to 12 inches with flowers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -salt tolerant -semi-evergreen foliage -drought tolerant and can thrive in a variety of soils -can tolerate light traffic -deadheading can lead to re-blooming 	
Scotch Moss <i>Sagina subluata</i>	Small white flowers early to mid summer	Very low growing plant 1-2 inches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -evergreen mat forming perennial -prefers moist soils -can tolerate some shade -tolerates medium traffic -bright green foliage -perfect for filling in cracks between walkways or in rock gardens 	

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<p>Creeping Potentilla <i>Potentilla reptans</i></p>	<p>Small yellow flower in spring</p>	<p>4-6 inches tall, low growing mat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -drought tolerant -will survive in a variety of soils -will tolerate some shade 	
<p>Prickly Pear <i>Opuntia humifusa</i></p>	<p>Yellow-orange flowers in early summer</p>	<p>5-10 inches tall, evergreen cactus that forms a mat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -very drought tolerant -only cactus native to Ontario -tolerates many soils *contains prickles which can injure if walked on or picked up 	
<p>Hens & Chicks <i>Sempevernum species</i></p>	<p>Flower colour varies with cultivar</p>	<p>Creeping groundcover that grows about 2 inches tall and 5-7 inches with a flower</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -great groundcover for sandy soils -extremely drought tolerant -can grow on rocks with only a bit of soil 	
<p>Juniper <i>Juniperus horizontalis</i></p>	<p>Non-flowering (<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i> 'Wiltonii' pictured)</p>	<p>Evergreen shrub, 6-18 inches, spread of 4 to 6 feet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -tolerates dry soils -blue to green to yellow foliage; depending on species or cultivar 	
<p>PARTIAL SHADE TO FULL SUN</p>				
<p>White Dutch Clover <i>Trifolium repens</i></p>	<p>White or pink flowers early summer through late summer</p>	<p>Low plant, about 3 inches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low maintenance -prefers poor-drained, fertile soil -attracts beneficial insects - resilient to heavy foot traffic, and dog urine -especially effective as a grass alternative 	

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<p>Birdsfoot Trefoil <i>Lotus corniculatus</i></p>	<p>Yellow flowers mid to late summer</p>	<p>Low growing plant, 3-5 inches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low maintenance -prefers poor-drained, fertile soil -attracts beneficial insects - resilient to heavy foot traffic, and dog urine -especially effective as a grass alternative, seed is inexpensive to buy 	
<p>Sedum <i>Sedum species</i></p>	<p>Varies with cultivar, flowering time varies from spring to fall with cultivar as well</p>	<p>Low creeping mat, 3 to 18 inches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -slow growing -does well in poor soil -variety of different coloured foliage, flowers and flowering times 	
<p>Barren Strawberry (Native) <i>Waldsteinia fragarioides</i></p>	<p>White/yellow</p>	<p>slow spreading mat 3 to 6 inches, spread 6 to 12 inches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -spring blooming -Tolerates a wide range of soils 	
<p>Geranium <i>Geranium maculatum</i></p>	<p>Pink to purple flower in spring to early summer</p>	<p>Ranges from 6-12 inches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -fast grower -grows well in shade -good pollinator plant 	
<p>Creeping, Bearberry, Rockspray Cotoneaster <i>Cotoneaster adpressus, dammeri and horizontalis</i></p>	<p>White or pink spring flowers, dark red fruit in fall</p>	<p>Evergreen shrub, 1 to 1.5 feet, spread of 4 to 8 feet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -prefers moist well-drained soil but will tolerate a range of conditions; effective in rock gardens and low banks -dark green leaves; bronzy to purplish in the fall 	
<p>PARTIAL SHADE TO FULL SHADE</p>				

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<p>Wild Violet</p>	<p>Purple flower in the spring</p>	<p>4-6 inches tall, spreading perennial</p>	<p>-drought tolerant ground cover that spreads quite quickly -great in a contained space *has an invasive growth habit and can take over a space quickly</p>	
<p>Partridge Berry <i>Mitchella repens</i> NATIVE</p>	<p>White (red berry)</p>	<p>1 to 3 inches, mat spreading 6 to 12 inches</p>	<p>-broadleaf evergreen -organically rich, medium moisture, well-drained soils -drought tolerant once established</p>	
<p>Bunchberry <i>Cornus Canadensis</i> NATIVE</p>	<p>White flower in the spring, red berries in the fall, red fall foliage</p>	<p>Creeping perennial, growing 3-6 inches tall</p>	<p>-all season interest groundcover that will grow in full shade -prefers moist soils -very rare & a great conversation piece (it is also known as creeping dogwood)</p>	
<p>Wintergreen <i>Gaultheria procumbens</i> NATIVE</p>	<p>White</p>	<p>4 to 6 inches, spread 6 to 12 inches</p>	<p>-broadleaf evergreen -prefers organically rich, evenly moist, acidic, well-drained soils -drought tolerant once established</p>	
<p>Foam Flower <i>Tiarella cordifolia</i> NATIVE</p>	<p>White flowers in the spring</p>	<p>3-5 inches without flowers, 5-10 inches with flowers</p>	<p>-great mat forming perennial for the shade -spreads quickly -flowers appear to be floating above the foliage</p>	

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<p>Japanese Spurge <i>Pachysandra terminalis</i></p>	<p>White flowers in the spring</p>	<p>6-10 inches</p>	<p>-fast spreading and thick mat forming perennial *can become invasive unless contained</p>	
<p>Sedge Species <i>Carex species</i></p>	<p>Colour can vary with cultivar</p>	<p>6-8 inches tall, spread 6 to 18 inches</p>	<p>-prefers moist, rich soils which do not dry out -drought tolerant once established</p>	
<p>Lungwort <i>Pulmonaria officinalis</i></p>	<p>Bluish-purple flowers in early spring</p>	<p>4-6 inches tall, 10 inches with flower</p>	<p>-spotted foliage -grows well in moist soils in full shade -moderately fast growing</p>	
<p>Bishop's Hat <i>Epimedium x youngianum</i></p>	<p>Light pinkish white in spring</p>	<p>6 to 8 inches, slow spreading 12 to 18 inches</p>	<p>-showy flower and good fall foliage</p>	
<p>Sweet Woodruff <i>Galium odoratum</i></p>	<p>White flowers in spring</p>	<p>8-12 inches, spreading mat 10 to 18 inches</p>	<p>-aromatic perennial -prefers average, medium to wet, well-drained soils -blooms late spring to early summer</p>	

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<p>Polypody Fern <i>Polypodium virginianum</i> NATIVE</p>	<p>Non-flowering</p>	<p>10 to 15 inches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -evergreen fern -grows well near cedars and in rocky areas -prefers well-drained, moist, humus, somewhat infertile soils 	
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GROUND COVERS AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO GRASS

A healthy, low maintenance lawn can be made up of a diverse mixture of groundcover species. These groundcovers can be hardier and better adapted to a range of conditions than traditional turf grasses. By having different species present, the lawn will be better able to survive pest infestation or disease outbreak because not all species will be equally susceptible. Groundcovers can reduce or eliminate the need for mowing or watering once established. They also come in a variety of colours and textures and many will bloom at some point through the growing season to provide an attractive, interesting lawn. Some groundcovers, such as clover, can tolerate foot traffic. Others are especially useful for areas that are difficult to grow grass on (i.e. steep banks and sandy slopes).