

## Converting Turf Grass into Beds



If you want to plant ornamental flowers or vegetables in an existing turf grass area, the first step should be to kill the existing grass. The dead grass can then be tilled in to help add more organic matter to your soil.

There are three recommended techniques for this activity; sun solarization, mulching with newspapers or chemical treatment with a product containing glyphosate. Each has some benefits and disadvantages.

Sun solarization traps radiant heat energy from the sun and causes the soil temperatures rise to as high as 140 degrees during the hot summer months. This is lethal to many bacteria, fungi, nematodes and weed seeds. This technique should only be used between early June and mid-September.

First, pull any weeds or old crops and rake the surface smooth. Next, run a water sprinkler for several hours or overnight, to soak the soil. This creates 100 percent humidity under the plastic, which acts with the heat.

Dig a trench all around the bed or plot 6 to 8 inches deep. Lay a clear plastic sheet, 3 to 6 mm thick, over the area, overlapping the trench on all sides. Fill in the trench, weighing down the plastic while pulling it as tight as possible.

It takes 4 to 6 weeks of sunny weather to solarize the soil. This technique uses no chemical control and is effective, but can only be done during the summer and takes some time for it to be effective.

A thick layer of newspaper (at least 8 sheets thick) covered with mulch can be used to kill turf grass. This technique is useful for beds where



perennial plants will be used, since you can plant directly through the layers of mulch and newspaper, while leaving the rest of the bed alone. This technique is not as effective on Bermudagrass or nut sedge (nut grass) as the other two techniques described.

Glyphosate, marketed under the names Round Up, Accord, and others, is a non-selective foliar-active herbicide. Any desirable plants, including lawn grasses, contacted by this spray will be killed if applied **when the plants are actively growing**.

Applications to perennial weeds are generally most effective as plants enter the flowering stage, or in the early fall. The bed can be tilled and new plants installed two weeks after the application.

Glyphosate has the advantage of being quick and will kill all plants, including Bermudagrass. Glyphosates will damage the upper portion of nut sedge, but will not kill the nut. In order to completely eradicate nut sedge, hand dig or treat it with the herbicides Manage or Image.

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