

## Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

# The grass is always greener ...

By Cynthia Brian

*"Society is like a lawn where every roughness is smoothed, every bramble eradicated, and where the eye is delighted by the smiling verdure of a velvet surface." – Washington Irving*



*A pole of pink and purple petunias shines brightly against the blue skyline.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*

The cool evenings, warm days, and majestic orange sunsets signal the season of fall. While children will be preparing for the festivities of Halloween, gardeners need to be thinking about greening their lawn costumes. Much to my dismay, throughout the drought our water company encouraged homeowners to dispense with growing grass and either let lawns die or replant with succulents and other drought resistant species. In my humble opinion, this was terrible advice as a healthy lawn offers so many benefits, not only to the environment but also to our health and well-being. It is also much more expensive to revamp a landscape than it is to maintain it, even minimally. With the drought in our rearview mirror, my email has been blowing up with requests on how to reinstall a green lawn.

Thankfully, all is not lost as autumn is the perfect time to plant a new lawn or reseed an existing one. Most grass seeds that you scatter in late October or early November will thicken and be well established by spring. Over-seeding a healthy existing lawn works wonders but if you have multiple bare spots, using a grass patch is a super alternative.

"What type of grass should I plant?" you may be thinking. Several readers have asked about UC Verde buffalograss. Although I have never set out plugs of this buffalograss, it is my understanding that this particular grass must be planted in the spring as it goes dormant in the winter, allowing for more weeds to take hold. It is also work intensive as you cannot just toss seeds or plant sod. Plugs need to be planted on a 12-inch center. Once established, it is resistant to most turf damaging insects and diseases and requires less water than other grasses. Since it is seedless, it produces less seed heads resulting in less pollen, which may be of interest to allergy sufferers.

My personal preferences to obtaining a greener grass is to use seeds from Pearl's Premium (www.PearlsPremium.com), red or white clover, or plant plugs of isotoma,

also known as blue star creeper. Full disclosure: I do not work for, nor have I any affiliation with any of these three favorite lawn alternatives. I recommend them because they work. You can plant just one species for a clean, fresh, green blanket of tactile grass, or you can mix and match as long as you realize that your lawn will resemble a patchwork quilt.

Here's a rundown on my three preferred lawns:

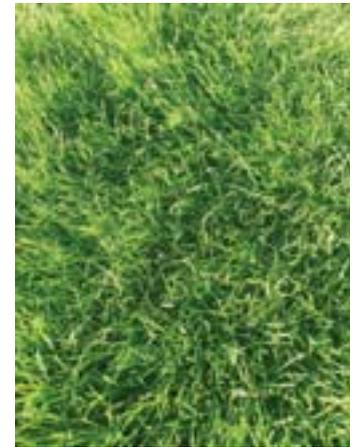
**Pearl's Premium:** [www.PearlsPremium.com](http://www.PearlsPremium.com)

Although you can start from scratch, I really appreciate being able to over-seed my existing lawn with grass seed that grows roots to 20 inches deep, starves out the weeds, and is easy to maintain. Pearl's Premium is constantly upgrading its seed to be the most effective for creating a beautiful lawn. This past year it added a thin white coating to the seed to help gardeners know where exactly the seed has been tossed. The coating also thwarts our feathered diners, although I suggest putting screens over areas with new lawn seed if you witness birds pecking at the ground. Spread the lawn seed at a rate of 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet right over your existing lawn. Add organic fertilizer and top dress with a quarter inch of organic compost. I like to spread the seed right before a rain, but otherwise water twice a day until the grass sprouts; then be attentive to watering needs. In our warmer climate, to maintain the greenest color, you may have to water deeply twice a week, but it will be less than using other grass seeds. Once established, the lawn gets so lush and thick that you may need to adjust your sprinkler heads. Although many people have indicated that they mow once a month, I have found that for the most manicured look, it is necessary to mow at least twice a month, or ideally, once a week at a mower height of 3.5 inches.

### Clover

At one time clover was systematically eradicated from lawns using pesticides. But as gardeners now realize the importance of organic living, more homeowners are including clover in their grass. As a legume, clover has the ability to turn nitrogen into fertilizer using the bacteria in its root system. It stays green all year, even when it is not watered on a regular basis. I love it because it thrives in conditions where other grass seeds struggle. It does fine in the sun or the shade and even in poorly drained soil.

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*The fine green leaves of Pearl's Premium, an excellent choice in scattering grass seed for a lush lawn.*



*Red or white clover is excellent for a lawn in combination with grass seed.*