

My favorite parts of growing clover, besides its self-fertilizing system, are the beautiful pink or white flowers that crown the tops of the clover when it is left uncut. Butterflies, bees, and beneficial insects flock to clover. Don't be afraid of the honeybees as they usually don't sting when away from their hives. Clover does best when it is mixed with grass seed. I mix mine with Pearl's Premium. Try incorporating two ounces of clover for 1,000 square feet of lawn. By planting the two together, you'll have a minimum care green lawn.

**Isotoma—Blue Star Creeper**

This lawn substitute is best used in small areas or between stepping stones. I like it for its tiny blue star flowers that surface and shine brightly spring through summer. I would only use it in combination with clover and Pearl's Premium because I have found that in the cold months it has a tendency



*The blue star flowers of isotoma are lovely as a filler in a grass seeded lawn.*

likes full sunshine, doesn't require much water, and sustains immense foot traffic, both human and animal, without damage. It sends out runners and creeps along and is especially good as a ground cover. If you like the idea of a patchwork lawn, buy a flat or two of isotoma and plant the plugs randomly throughout your existing grass as a filler and thriller.

For homeowners who want instant gratification, sod is the answer. The caveat with planting sod is that the roots don't grow deeply enough and sod has a shorter lifespan. You can lengthen the longevity by over-seeding when bare spots begin appearing. By throwing seed on top of the sod, keeping the grass watered and fed, you'll be able to have a long lasting green oasis.

**Benefits of Maintaining a Lawn**

Although many people tend to discourage lawns in landscapes as a water conservation method, I am a firm believer that the humble grass shoot offers benefits to our health and well-being. Besides the fact that children and animals enjoy a safe, comfortable place to tumble and toss, lawns contribute to better air quality by trapping dust and smoke particles while cooling the air from the ground up. Our environments are made more habitable by the generation of oxygen absorbing the pollutants of carbon and sulfur dioxide. Lawns clean the air we breathe. Erosion is controlled because water can't carve deep recesses in a thickly planted lawn. Water filters through turf grass making our ground waters safer and cleaner for the environment. A patch of green soothes the eye in viewing a landscape, offering a resting space between the color explosions of flowers and shrubs. And a huge plus in our fire prone communities, lawns offer a buffer zone for fire prevention.

The grass will only be greener if you maintain it. You'll be rewarded with better health for you and the environment. Your green grass is your safety zone. May all your roughness be smoothed as you delight in your velvet verdure.

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*As a ground cover, Baby Tears works well in the shade. It is not a lawn substitute.*



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