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I know many homeowners attach great importance to their lawns.

In most cases lawns are more important than the rest of the garden.

More time and expense goes into lawns than any other part of the garden ....

Why I don't know, but I think it is a kind of social and status symbol.

Also sign of hard work and dedication!!!

Well if you really want to know it is the least important aspect when it comes to good sustainable practice.

Yes, it has its practical use in active recreation and design as it creates a sense of space, but this can of course be mirrored by using groundcover, mulch or a hard surface if we don't use our lawns.

Large expanses of manicured lawns are probably more of a liability to the environment than an asset!!!

They cost a lot to maintain, demand plenty of water we don't have, and are generally over fertilized with high nitrate fertilizers that raise soil acidity, have a detrimental effect on micro organisms and soil life plus I am afraid to say, more weed growth.

This passion for the perfect lawn could stem from two facts

Like the carpet we walk on indoors, we feel safe when it is level, clean and generally smart looking because it makes everything else look good.

Secondly, lawns are historically the part of the garden we tend to use most at a certain stage and therefore want them neat and playable.

It's probably the only part of the garden which we feel we have total control over and that is why a lot of effort is put into it.

These days lawn and turf care is virtually a science on its own and is considered a specialized field in the industry.

Vast sums of money go into professional sports fields and some of them can hardly be called natural as they have all sorts of synthetic elements to increase their durability and good looks.

We don't need that perfection at home but there is much we can do to keep the lawn healthy

Most lawns need well drained soil, but at the same time they must have good water holding capacity.

Too sandy it dries out... too much clay it drowns.

The answer is to prepare well before planting and select the correct grass for your needs that is maintenance friendly (if there is such a thing)

They all need sun and a fair amount of water to keep them looking good!!

They should not be overfed with high nitrate fertilizers to 'green them up'!!

Unfortunately, the green is just never green enough for many and they are led into temptation.

Older lawns sometimes need what we call a spring lawn treatment which in fact can be done in autumn before the rains, or at the end of the rainy season before it gets too dry!!....if you can time that one right!!

The following is a simple method which can be modified according to local climate or personal "flavour":

If you have an old lawn, remove as much as possible of the top growth by cross cutting and removing the thick spongy layer of dead material below

Lower the blades a bit after each cut until you virtually expose the root layer.

I am not a great one for covering with top soil but it might be necessary if the lawn is uneven or the soil is very sandy with little organic material in it to hold moisture.

At the stage before top dressing, give it a light feed with 3.2.1 Organic or something similar, water in well. Time it right and the rain does it for you!

If you do apply a layer of quality top soil or lawn dressing...then it should not be more than 5-10 mm thick once you have levelled off.

You can also use a hard broom or squeegee to push it into the root zone!!

Don't water again after applying top soil as you will land up with a sea of mud.

Rather, as mentioned, a good watering after fertilizing but before applying the dressing should be enough to get it to push through quickly.

Once it pushes through then you can start with light watering to maintain growth

A few maintenance tips -

1. Never cut your lawn too low in hot weather as it dries out quicker. Slightly longer grass tends to shade and protect the roots.
2. Always cut your lawn in a different direction – that is – cross cut differently every week
3. Don't over-fertilize – it weakens the lawn. Fertilizer needs water, if you don't have water....don't fertilize. Its not advisable to use high nitrate fertilizers such as Limestone Ammonium Nitrate.  
Slow release fertilizers are better but don't overdo it!

And lastly if you don't use your lawn then reduce the size or get rid of it.

Lawns are a way of giving you access to parts of the garden and are necessary for active recreation. Enlarging shrubberies and creating small natural mulched pathways will allow access into the planted areas and create more interest!!