**Groundcover Choices**

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A key feature of a low water use landscape is to replace most or all of the grass with drought tolerant groundcovers. There are many to choose from. Some even have blooms.

In addition to requiring less water than lawn grass, groundcovers require less maintenance. They grow to a certain height and stay there. The recommended groundcovers are also less likely to require pesticide sprays or fertilizer.

Asiatic jasmine is probably the favorite groundcover. It can be grown in shade or sun and appears on some deer proof lists. Asiatic jasmine is evergreen with shiny tear-drop shaped leaves. It can be grown as rolling hills of plants 18 inches tall or cut with square edges and a surface as low as 4 inches tall. Most folks chose an intermediate height.

Another evergreen groundcover is dwarf Ruellia. It grows to 12 inches tall in sun or shade and has an attractive tubular bloom in blue, pink or white. It has long strap like leaves on a central stalk. Deer do not relish dwarf Ruellia but will eat it during a drought.

For full shade monkey grass and liriope are good choices. They look like grass but do not need to be mowed. Monkey grass grows to about 5 inches tall. There are several versions of liriope. Giant liriope can be 18 inches tall. Using liriope and monkey grass in a layered arrangement at different heights is especially attractive.

Rosemary is an evergreen plant that makes a deer proof groundcover in full sun. The upright version grows to 2 feet tall and prostrate rosemary grows to about 1 foot tall. Prostrate rosemary is especially attractive to use on the edge of retaining walls or on slopes. Rosemary has blue flowers in early spring.

For more examples of groundcovers and the specifics of growing each of the choices, visit plantanswers.com.

**Gardening Tasks**

Do not cut back your spring bulb foliage or wildflowers until the foliage browns (bulbs) and the seeds mature (wildflowers)

It is time to fertilize your lawn grass. Use a slow release fertilizer such as 19-5-9. Spread about 1 pound (1 cup) per 1,000 square feet of lawn.

Some low chill peach varieties ripen in May. They can be harvested when the background cover changes from green to yellow.

Spider mites suck the juices from tomato leaves. The leaves turn dusty and then yellow. The pests are hard to control but some control is achieved by spraying under the leaves with Malathion, seaweed extract, neem oil and even water.