

## TAPESTRY LAWNS

### What is a tapestry lawn?

Also known as a freedom lawn or a grass-free lawn, the tapestry lawn is a beautiful, environmentally friendly alternative to traditional grass lawns. A mixture of lowing growing species are grown together to form a diverse sward that benefits from light footfall. These lawns need no fertilising, much less mowing (although it will need a chop several times a year so you can't do away with that lawnmower just yet!) and a little attention to detail as the occasional few blades of grass will have to be weeded out!

### Why grass free?

The monoculture of a traditional grass lawn is high maintenance and not very beneficial to pollinators or the environment. The tapestry lawn reverses this and is being increasingly adopted by parks and other public spaces in the UK.

### How to start

Research the species that you wish to introduce to start your new lawn. For success you will need a minimum of 12 varieties but the more you can include the better.

Establish your new plants in seed trays, with a single variety in each tray. These will have a nice density and effectively prevent light from reaching the ground beneath them when planted.

Remove the existing surface layer of the area you intend to convert – this is often turf – wherever possible. This will take off both nutrients and weed seeds.

Lay your blocks of plants out, directly from the seed trays, in as mixed a fashion as you can. Some species may not thrive and this mosaic pattern will help to minimise any early bare patches.

Although your lawn will not normally require watering, don't forget to water at least twice during the first week or two to help your new lawn plants establish themselves.

### Maintaining your lawn

Mowing is important. If your lawn is not mown occasionally the taller and more vigorous species will start to dominate and you could end up with something closer to a meadow than a lawn.

Cut down to approximately 5cm and allow the lawn to grow no higher than 9cm. This will happen more frequently in the first couple of years but eventually you can expect to be mowing your lawn as little as 3-5 times a year. This will vary slightly for everybody and your choice of species will influence this.

Yes, you will cut off all of the flowers. Bear in mind that for every hundred blooms that are mown off there will be hundreds more before long.

Use a lawnmower that will remove the clippings in order to prevent the build-up of a thatch which can adversely affect the flowering species of your lawn.

There is no need to fertilise as clover and other legumes will be fixing sufficient nitrogen to keep your green space looking marvellous.

Weeding – a few of your local weed species may introduce themselves to your lawn – if they integrate well then consider them welcome. Do remove any grasses as they make themselves known – they are easiest to spot in the spring as they tend to get moving faster and grow higher than the surrounding sward.

### Which species will suit my tapestry?

Most low growing plants that spread by rhizomes or runners will work, including a lot of British native species. Some experimental lawns in the UK are trialling up to 70 different species. More information can be found online but to get you started we would like to suggest the following...

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| • <b>Purple Bidibidi</b>     | <i>Acaena inermis</i>        |
| • <b>Yarrow</b>              | <i>Achillea millefolium</i>  |
| • <b>Bugle</b>               | <i>Ajuga reptans</i>         |
| • <b>Bellis daisy</b>        | <i>Bellis perennis</i>       |
| • <b>Chamomile</b>           | <i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>    |
| • <b>Ground Ivy</b>          | <i>Glechoma hederacea</i>    |
| • <b>Bachelors Buttons</b>   | <i>Leptinella dioica</i>     |
| • <b>Matted pratia</b>       | <i>Lobelia pedunculata</i>   |
| • <b>Creeping Jenny</b>      | <i>Lysimachia nummularia</i> |
| • <b>Mouse-ear Hawkweed</b>  | <i>Pilosella officinarum</i> |
| • <b>Creeping Buttercup</b>  | <i>Ranunculus repens</i>     |
| • <b>White Clover</b>        | <i>Trifolium repens</i>      |
| • <b>Germander Speedwell</b> | <i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>   |
| • <b>Sweet Violet</b>        | <i>Viola odorata</i>         |

