

# Plant Perennial Ground Cover



## Turf Alternatives Series

[bluethumb.org/turf-alternatives](http://bluethumb.org/turf-alternatives)

**With so much of our urban and suburban environment covered by impermeable surfaces** (roofs, streets, parking lots, etc.), what we choose to plant in the remaining patches of soil **has drastic consequences for water and habitat quality.**

### About Perennial Ground Cover

Though many things can technically be considered perennial ground cover, we use the term to mean a matrix of tightly-knit grasses and forbs that take the place of traditional turf grass. If you have low-use areas and welcome a non-traditional look, a biodiverse perennial ground cover offers maximum ecological impact—though it generally requires more investment of planning and money and has higher maintenance needs while establishing than other turf alternative options. The back of this sheet offers a starter list of options that have been recommended for their hardiness, ecological benefits, and relative low-growing nature and ease of maintenance. Of course, if ordinances allow, you could go further and convert your yard into a native meadow or prairie.

### Planting and Establishing Perennial Ground Cover

Planting plugs is the fastest way to establish perennial groundcover, but can be expensive over a large area. Other options are to work in phases, or to choose a combination of plugs and seeding. While plants spread, keep an eye out for weeds. It may require a trained eye or some research to spot the difference between a beneficial plant and an unwanted one. Once established, the ground cover should be thick enough to inhibit weed germination and hardy enough to compete with most intruding weeds.

Visit [bluethumb.org/turf-alternatives](http://bluethumb.org/turf-alternatives) for more information, or [bluethumb.org/plants](http://bluethumb.org/plants) for more plant options.

## Perennial Ground Cover for Yards and Boulevards

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Bloom	Height	Sun/Shade	Soil	Native
Flowers	Calico Aster	<i>Symphotrichum lateriflorum</i>	white	24"	both	mesic	Yes
	Common Blue Violet	<i>Viola sororia</i>	purple	4"	both	mesic	Yes
	Creeping Thyme	<i>Thymus serpyllum</i>	purple	2-4"	sun	dry	No
	Dutch White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	white	6-12"	both	dry	No
	Ground Plum	<i>Astragalus crassicaarpus</i>	purple	12"	sun	dry to mesic	Yes
	Lanceleaf Coreopsis	<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	yellow	12-24"	sun	dry	Yes
	Prairie Groundsel	<i>Packera plattensis</i>	yellow	12-16"	sun	dry	Yes
	Prairie Smoke	<i>Geum triflorum</i>	pink	8"	sun	dry to mesic	Yes
	Pussytoes	<i>Antennaria plantaginifolia</i>	white	12"	sun	dry	Yes
	Self-heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris ssp. lanceolata</i>	purple	2-12"	both	mesic	Yes
	Sweet White Violet	<i>Viola blanda</i>	white	6"	shade	mesic	Yes
Woodland Strawberry	<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	white	6-10"	shade	mesic	Yes	
Grasses/Sedges	Blue Grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	n/a	12"	sun	dry	Yes
	Fine Fescues	<i>Festuca sp.</i>	n/a	1-8"	both	dry	Some
	Ivory Sedge	<i>Carex eburnea</i>	n/a	6"	shade	dry to mesic	Yes
	Path Rush	<i>Juncus tenuis</i>	n/a	6-12"	sun	dry to mesic	Yes
	Pennsylvania Sedge	<i>Carex pennsylvanica</i>	n/a	8"	both	dry to mesic	Yes
	Prairie Junegrass	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	n/a	24"	sun	dry	Yes
	Sideoats Grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	n/a	24"	sun	dry to mesic	Yes