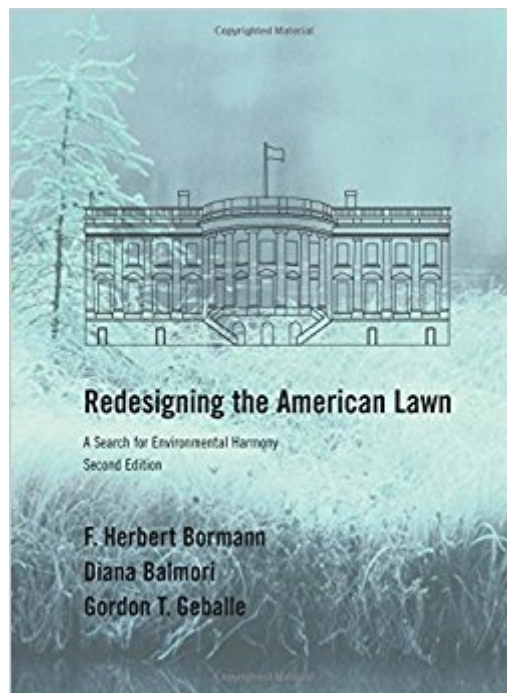


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Redesigning The American Lawn: A Search For Environmental Harmony, Second Edition



Synopsis

The authors in this book argue that our dedication to maintaining beautiful lawns is contributing to the serious environmental problems facing the planet, and they offer strategies for creating and caring for aesthetically pleasing and ecologically sound lawns. This new edition updates the original text and adds a chapter and illustrations showing what progress has been made in the ecological management of landscapes over the past decade. Reviews of the first edition: "An extremely readable summation of the origins of the addiction to lawns, and of the environmental reasons why Americans should kick the habit." •Anne Raver, New York Times Book Review "A manual for improving a large part of the American environment while reducing pollution, saving Americans a large amount of money, and beautifying the landscape." •Edward O. Wilson

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Customer Reviews

Lawns are celebrated in America as a mark of civility and achievement: nature bowing to the well-gloved human hand and the lawn mower. But American fanaticism about the well-kept family turf does not always serve the best interests either of the turf or of the American. A product, in part, of a 1991 Yale graduate seminar, "The American Lawn," this work of scholarship and suggestion seeks to improve our attitudes and our front yards by cutting down on pesticide use, replacing power mowers with the hand-held kind, adopting types of grasses best suited to one's habitat and maybe even allowing a true-blue meadow to develop, clover and all. Lawns are impositions of will, not of nature, and the idea of returning will to nature--or collaborating with it more respectfully than

we have--will not appeal to everyone. But the idea is sensible and fair, and this book--also sensible and fair--may, with luck, help to spread it around. Bormann is an emeritus professor of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University; Balmori is a lecturer at Yale; Geballe is assistant dean of the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As the title indicates, the emphasis here is on shaping a new aesthetic for a new ecological ethic. The idea is not to do away with the lawn but to design and manage it to reduce its present damage to the environment. However, the authors (Yale Univ. Sch. of Forestry and Environmental Studies) also propose two alternatives to the conventional lawn: "freedom lawns," which would allow natural, unrestricted growth of grasses and low-growing herbaceous plants, and total replacement with new landscape designs. Rede signing is wide-ranging, balanced, and imaginative, but, unfortunately, short on practical details on implementation. This is a good buy for academic and larger public libraries, but don't throw away your other lawn-care books. For a popular book on the same topic, see Sara Stein's *Noah's Garden*, LJ 4/1/93.--Ed.- Richard Shotwell, MRA Laboratories Inc., North Adams, Mass. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book takes a long, hard look at the industry surrounding lawn care, with its chemicals and fertilizers, and asks whether this is necessary for a good life, and examines the history of how Americans came to value these artificially cultivated huge expanses of mown grass. It also details several case studies where suburban folks successfully challenged the neighborhood norms and morphed a manicured lawn into a more natural hodgepodge of plant life that is better for the environment, still lovely, and much less work and cost and waste to maintain. Even though this book is decades old, the information in it is more relevant now than ever.

I enjoyed this book and now have a new appreciation for what I'm seeing when I walk through my neighborhood. Some homeowners water continuously, some have pesticides sprayed (Caution signs), some have no lawns, some have brown lawns. This book actually changed my actions: I bought lower nitrogen fertilizer for my fall lawn care. It was three times more expensive than the 26% nitrogen option but I decided to make a conscious environmental decision based on my reading of this book.

Gave this one as a gift to son in law who is a landscape architect.

I should really write an in depth review of this book. It is interesting and makes some good points, but it also presents things from a very biased perspective, and some of the information is out of date.

I have to say that I bought this book on a lark, not expecting much from it. I was wrong. It presents a whole new way to look at the typical suburban lawn, namely mine. I have to admit that I have not yet come to grips with the notion that a dandelion might have a place in my lawn, but I have come to love the sea of white that is a clover lawn in bloom. The difficulty in that is that my neighbors do not love my clover lawn. Mowed short, my new lawn has still drawn criticism. Next spring, I will begin to add elements of a meadow to my lawn. That should be an adventure with my neighbors. The book is really interesting. What it does more than anything else is to rewrite what might be possible in even thinking about what "lawn" means. That there is an alternative to a sea of uniform green is wonderful. That adding the usual fertilizer/weed killer chemistry actually takes the life out of my lawn is an eye opener. And that one might be released from being enslaved to a kind of lawn that is utterly foreign to where I live is truly a relief. The practical steps back to sane lawn work and to a life giving lawn are clear, useful, inspiring, and effective. Take a look at this book. Read it slowly and at least allow the possibility that it offers a better way.

This book's forte is 2 things: Its' explanation of the negative impact of millions of monoculture, traditional lawns - not on just the environment, but on the lifestyles and wallets of those who tend them. And then it offers sound advice (which does -NOT- start with "get rid of your existing grass") which can be easily followed by the average homeowner. The solutions proposed in this book are not radical, unattractive schemes, and most of the suggestions offered will result in a BETTER LOOKING YARD and savings of time and money. I read it from cover to cover twice. I hope to soon have my yard working for me, instead of me working for my yard. I found a good compliment to this book in "The Lawn, A History of an American Obsession," by Virginia Scott Jenkins. If you're interested in more of the history and background of the entire lawn concept, (and some neat old pictures of advertising,) you'll love this book. It explains how agriculture, chemical companies, the garden industry, golfing, housing developments, world wars, etc... and the advent of new inventions have come together to result in an entire lifestyle revolving around 'the lawn.' The complete answer to the question, "Why do we have lawns, and what did people used to have around their property?"

Read this, then read "Redesigning" to see what having all these lawns does to the world and the people in them, (and, of course, suggestions for improving things in your own little slice of the world.)

Most Americans do not realize how much their tastes in gardening have been affected by marketing on the part of lawn care companies. Nor do they seem to realize what environmental havoc they wreak through the lawn care practices preached on TV, and promulgated every time they watch the Masters Golf tournament on TV and think they should try to emulate those greens and fairways at home. They have been seduced into an unrealistic world that wastes their time (why mow?), money (why put fertilizer down 4 times a year?) and the environment (Do they really even have the weeds or bugs in their lawn that the 'weed and feed', and 'grub killers' are prescribed for? If not, why are they paying extra for the privilege of putting down toxins they don't even need?) This book is a scholarly approach to reviewing the problem - highly recommended if you tend to ask "WHY?" before "How much?"

I bought this book expecting more detail on herbicides and insecticides than the book actually contained. This was a mistake on my part though and the information on lawn care and the harmful effects of current practices were made clear with plenty of easy to relate to examples. Well worth the money to buy, and you only need an evening to read it as the content is not difficult to digest.

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