

## Ask Cynthia Brian-Isotoma Reader's Request

Hello Cynthia,

*I'm thinking of replacing my ugly barren lawn with fake turf so my kids can play, but read that you like isotoma. How quickly does isotoma grow? Can I just buy a bag of it? Can I plant it this late in the season? Will the kids be able to play on it? Thanks so much for all your help.*

Patrick

Hi Patrick:

So happy you emailed me first before buying fake turfgrass. For nature lovers, fake is a no-go! I'd rather encourage readers to replace lawn with wood chips or gravel rather than ever going plastic. Yuck, yuck.

With that admonishment, you will LOVE isotoma, also known as Blue Star Creeper. My lawn is a couple of decades old and whenever I have brown patches, they are filled with isotoma. The secret to any lawn or garden, as I've often written, is the soil. If you augment and amend your soil, the isotoma will spread quickly. Being native to Australia, New Zealand, the West Indies, and the Society Islands, isotoma stays green all year here in our area and blooms consistently until frost. It's super durable and a great lawn substitute plus it is so pretty and very easy to care for. Of course it's a bonus that the tiny blue flowers are stars. I don't know how big your lawn area is, but I suggest you measure, then, call a soil company to deliver a few yards of hero soil. Spread it around your entire lawn and fill in the bare areas with isotoma – it isn't picky about soil. It will grow in neutral, alkaline, or acidic, yet it's always a better idea to start with a rich foundation.

It's not too late to plant as long as you water more as temperatures rise. I plant isotoma all year around and it is evergreen throughout all the seasons. Your kids will love the texture and soft, cushiony feel. Isotoma is almost as rugged as grass but it can take up to a year to get established. Patience is required. Once it's established, your kids can do somersaults, kick balls, and play on it just as they would regular lawn. It works in both sun and shade and is a "no mow" ground cover. Now that is something to shout about!

Many people use isotoma on patios between pavers or on paths between stones, or as a border edging. It really is beautiful and so adaptable to numerous situations. Although you may find isotoma seed, I prefer to buy a few flats, spacing each plant about 12-18 inches apart for a rapid filler. The spread is up to 24 inches. Foliage is a striking deep green sprinkled with glorious light blue stars. My goal is to eventually replace my entire grass lawn with the blue stars of isotoma. That would be true Star Style! Enjoy!

Happy gardening and happy growing!

Cynthia

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I am available as a speaker, designer, and consultant.

Cynthia will answer one or more questions every other issue as space allows. Email your comments or questions to

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