

ST. AUGUSTINEGRASS CULTIVATION



The University of Georgia
Center for Urban Agriculture
edited by Walter Reeves, Dr. Clint Waltz & Dr. Tim Murphy
January, 2003



St. Augustinegrass is a common lawn grass in middle and southern Georgia. It is green during the growing season and goes semi-dormant in winter. It is easy to re-sod if damaged. 'Floratine', 'Raleigh', 'Floratam', 'Palmetto' etc. are common St. Augustinegrass varieties. It is commonly planted from sod or plugs because of problems with seed viability.

The grass has large flat stems and broad coarse leaves somewhat similar to centipedegrass. It has an attractive blue-green color and forms a deep, fairly dense turf. It spreads by long, above-ground runners. St. Augustinegrass is the most shade-tolerant warm-season grass. It is susceptible to winter injury, especially if planted in the upper third of Georgia. Perhaps the greatest disadvantage of this grass is its sensitivity to an insect: the chinch bug. Chinch bugs can cause extensive damage to St. Augustinegrass if not controlled. Gray leaf spot disease causes severe damage. Fertilize moderately, based on soil test recommendations.

'Palmetto' and 'Raleigh' are claimed to be somewhat cold-tolerant. During peak summertime heat, 'Raleigh' has been noted to yellow. Supplemental iron applications are needed to reduce this yellowing tendency. 'Raleigh' is best adapted to heavier, organic, clayey soils with a medium to low soil pH.

SOIL PREPARATION - NEW LAWNS

1. Kill all weeds by spraying the area with a non-selective weed killer containing glyphosate (RoundUp, etc.) two weeks before planting.
2. Till the soil thoroughly to a depth of six inches, mixing in lime and fertilizer according to soil test results. Slope the soil away from buildings to prevent water collection in unwanted areas.
3. Rake the area smooth, removing rocks, clumps and grassy debris.
4. Roll the area with a water-filled roller to reveal low spots.
5. Fill low spots with soil.
6. Rake lightly and plant.

DISEASE CONTROL

Most lawn diseases are caused by poor cultural practices. Overwatering is most often the culprit.

1. Irrigate after midnight and before noon, allowing the grass to dry before nightfall.
2. Correct identification is a must before a fungicide is applied. Call your local Extension office for advice.

INSECT CONTROL

A healthy, vigorously growing lawn can absorb a great deal of insect pressure without lasting harm.

1. Identify insects or grubs before applying an insecticide. Call your local Extension office for advice.
2. Treatment for white grub control is not necessary unless more than 12 per square foot are found in irrigated turf.

SOIL TESTING

1. Use a clean trowel and plastic bucket. In an area to be tested, take a deep, hearty scoop of soil (a *plug*) from ten randomly selected spots. A plug should be four to six inches deep. Place the plugs in the bucket.
2. Mix the plugs together in the bucket. Remove grass, twigs, stones, etc. This is a representative sample of all of the soil in a particular area.
3. Call your local County Extension office. (Look in the phone book under the government listings for your county.) They will give you details on how to bring a soil sample to them. There is a nominal charge, in the range of \$4.00 to \$8.00, for each sample.
4. The University of Georgia Soils Laboratory will test your soil and send you a written report on the nutrients it contains. The acidity (pH) of the soil will also be noted. Fertilizer recommendations and schedules are included, along with the amount of lime needed by your soil.

regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability.