

Post Rock Answers

By Cassie Thiessen May 3rd, 2024

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Warm-Season Lawn Care

Buffalograss and other warm season grasses are a great choice for gardeners wanting a more low-maintenance lawn. Buffalograss is a low-growing, fine-textured grass that requires less mowing, watering, and fertilizing. Once established, it can survive extreme heat, drought, and cold. Buffalograss is not managed like other lawn grasses; it should be planted by those who appreciate the natural look of this native prairie grass. If you have buffalograss or want to grow it in your lawn, we have information to help you keep it thriving.

Watering: The most beneficial time to water buffalograss is in June, July, and August when drought tends to be more severe. Spring watering often benefits weeds more than the grass. A good soaking at the end of a dry fall can also help the roots and crown maintain good condition over the winter and encourages more vigorous turf the following spring. Overall, in heavy drought conditions, one or two deep soakings during the summer is enough for low-maintenance areas.

Fertilizing: If you want a truly low-maintenance turf you can opt to not apply fertilizer. If you want a healthier stand of turf you can apply .5-2lbs of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. Use a controlled-release formulation to prevent excessive growth. Fertilize in June when grass is actively growing. Perform a soil test to determine the exact nutrient needs of your lawn.

Mowing: Buffalograss requires much less mowing than cool-season grasses. Buffalograss will only reach 4-8 inches tall so if you prefer a more naturalistic area, you may opt to not mow at all. However, most homeowners will prefer a 2-4" height. You may need to mow to keep weeds down and to avoid weeds going to seed. Frequency of mowing depends on the amount of watering and fertilizing. Buffalograss does not produce thatch, so there is no need to collect lawn clippings. Leaving them on the lawn returns nutrients to the soil.

Weeds: Weeds are the most frequent problem in buffalograss lawns, especially during establishment. An effective long-term weed control program should focus on timely and correct cultural practices- watering, fertilization, and mowing. The best defense against any weed is a healthy stand of turf. Cool-season weeds can invade in spring and fall when grass is dormant. Quinclorac controls many types of weeds, including crabgrass. Herbicides can also be used to

treat broadleaf weeds. Herbicides containing glyphosate should only be used when buffalograss is fully dormant. Usually a sunny day in February works great for this application.

If you are interested in starting a buffalograss lawn, stop by the Extension Office. We have a planting calendar and information on seeding rates. Buffalograss is an excellent warm season turf, that might be a perfect choice for your lawn! If you have any questions, please contact the Extension Office.

Post Rock Extension District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith counties. Cassie may be contacted at cthiessen@ksu.edu or by calling Beloit (785-738-3597).