

TURF TIPS

The Turf Care Newsletter of Prestige Shrub and Tree, Ltd.®
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This is your third scheduled visit for the year. At this visit, the fescue will be receiving weed controls until we move into May at which point the fescue will receive a systemic fungicide for brown patch reduction. Zoysia will receive its season long granular fertilizer. If we find incidence of spring warm season turf diseases, we will spot treat the disease activity during this visit. If additional fungicide treatments are needed between regular visits, they must be done at additional cost. Finally, as temperatures permit, we will also be applying weed control on all turf types

Warm Season Turf Aeration

Spring is a great time of year when nature is producing flowers, new leaves and a new turf lawn for the season. Aeration of your warm season turf, especially Bermuda, can be done anytime through the growing season until late summer. Prestige has already started aerating our customers who have ordered this service and we have seen great results thanks to the rains keeping the soil soft. Prestige offers aeration service to our warm season customers in April, May, June and July. The practice of aeration opens the soil to facilitate the movement of oxygen, moisture and fertilizer to the root zone of the turf allowing for improved root growth. Since our clay soils are quick to compact, aeration also helps reduce compaction problems and turf stress. Call our office if you would like this service and to see if Prestige is able to aerate your turf.

Rainfall And Irrigation

2023 rainfall started out with a bang in January recording over 7" of rainfall but rainfall totals have some

what subsided in February going into March recording rainfall totals that are slightly below averages. We have currently recorded 9.55" of rain for the first two months of the year. Though our rainfall seems to be adequate, even overabundant at times, our weather can quickly change into a dry spell going weeks without meaningful rain. Because we don't have a water table in Atlanta and our rainfall is either used by plants, evaporates or travels through our soil eventually running off hard pan clay or rock beneath our soil, rainfall is not cumulative and is not stored in the soil. Once the rain stops, it doesn't take long for the soil to lose its moisture. It is important to keep track of the rainfall we are receiving by utilizing a rain gauge.

If you have not yet brought your irrigation system on line, go ahead and get it turned on and checked out. Have your irrigation company check the controller, valves and heads and also check for proper coverage. Be sure you do not have irrigation heads buried under soil or blocked by shrubbery that has grown to envelop the irrigation head. Relocate any heads that may be blocked and readjust heads that are not operating properly.

Maintain your one time per week irrigation regimen if we are not receiving adequate rain to grow healthy turf. This helps the turf adjust to the lack of rainfall we usually encounter in April and May.

One inch of irrigation per week is a guideline. If your turf is staying wet then you may not need to water every seven days. Practice "as needed" irrigation and only water when the soil begins to dry.

It is usually best to set your irrigation on manual unless you are out of town or have a rain sensor installed so as to reduce over watering.

Zoysia Not Expected To Fully Green-Up Until Mid To Late May

This is really the norm for each year and is the normal green up time for Zoysia and this year will be no different.

Perception is a tricky beast! Most of us equate March and April with the full onset of Springtime. Spring is a time of renewal and the shrubs and trees respond to the early warm temperatures with a profusion of new growth and flower displays. Even with all this effusive shrub and tree growth, you may ask why your Zoysia turf is just poking along. The answer lies in the very complex system at work.

In general, turf needs multiple events to happen simultaneously to really begin its strong spring growth. Day and night time temperatures need to be correct along with soil temperatures and moisture. Day length also needs to be correct. Until all these systems are properly aligned, your turf is just not going to fully green up and take off. Most trees and shrubs are simply less picky about needing ALL the correct conditions and consequently respond to the warm spring air temperatures much more quickly but may also consequently suffer from late season frosts.

So, in actuality, full green up should not be expected until well into May for Zoysia. Trying to push the turf is not good for the turf. The turf

will green up at its usual pace when ALL the forces of nature properly align!

Pay Close Attention In May

As we move into May, fescue becomes very susceptible to fungal attack by *Rhizoctonia*, which causes Brown Patch. For most yards, the regular sprays will be all that is needed to control the fungal activity.

Keep in mind proper cultural practices will help reduce the incidence of all diseases. Watering one time per week at the proper time (between the hours of 10 PM and 5:00 AM) to get 1" of equivalent rainfall and weekly mowing at the proper height (3" - 4" for fescue and 1 1/2" - 2" for warm season turf) with a sharp blade to prevent grass blade tearing, will help reduce turf stress and disease susceptibility. Moving turf mowing heights up as the summer gets hotter and drier can help alleviate turf stress and reduce disease activity.

Installing Warm Season Turf

May through the end of August is an optimum time to install warm season turf which is bermuda or zoysia in our area. Here are some tips and guidelines if you are planning to do some installation. Each year, we answer questions about turf varieties and their shade tolerance.

At last check there are a mind boggling 186 different varieties of Bermuda being grown. There are much fewer zoysia varieties but enough that selecting the correct turf for your growing situation is very confusing.

All warm season turf requires adequate sunlight to thrive. There are more shade tolerant types being grown BUT "shade tolerant" does not mean they do well in all shade conditions. The key is they require reduced levels of FULL sunlight with SOME shade. Even the most shade tolerant of the group, TifTuf Bermuda, requires at least 6 hours of direct sun to adequately grow. When any of these turf types are installed in conditions with less than 6 hours full sun they tend to thin severely.

These warm season turf types are sodded, not seeded, with two exceptions. One is Zenith zoysia, a coarser textured zoysia, which can be seeded and there is seed derived sod available. The other is hybrid/common seeded bermudas. Centipede is also available as seed or sod. **Due to winter kill tendencies, we do not recommend centipede or any of the common or hybrid seeded turf types.**

Zeon® is the most shade and variable condition tolerant zoysia (Note: this is Zeon® not Zenith®) As shade becomes heavier they tend to thin but usually do not fade completely. In conditions where you have low winter sunlight the turf will tend to melt away and will not recover to any extent until mid July. All the other zoysia types require a minimum of 6 hours full sun or they will thin, languish and eventually completely fade away.

For full sun conditions, any of the other hybrid bermudas or zoysias are suitable but they all have very different growth characteristics. Before installing any of these turf types visit a property where they are established! Be sure to see the turf in April/May, July/August and then in December to see how they grow and look at different times of the year.

In examining your future lawn, look at areas that collect water or have poor drainage (downspouts or collection areas). These areas, if not improved, will not produce quality turf and will be a constant challenge. Also keep in mind that turf and trees do not get along. The tree will out compete with the turf for water, nutrients and sunlight. Some trees also change the biology of the soil to better suit their needs at the expense of turf. Unfortunately, this is a battle that will always be won by the trees. It is better to install mulch rings around trees to protect the roots maintain soil moisture than to install turf that is destined to fail.

By downloading a sun tracker app you can see where the sun tracks at

different times of the year and can help you determine if certain areas of the lawn can support warm season turf, should be converted to fescue or if they need to be made into bed areas. Sun Surveyor for Android users and Sun Seeker for Apple users are the apps that we use regularly to determine total hours of direct sunlight in a given area. Remember, those who are advising you on your turf selection are there to sell turf. Be your own advocate and determine your sun track in relation to the installation areas. By determining your site's challenge areas and shady areas you can design and plant accordingly to hopefully avoid future disappointment. Lastly, do not believe all the hype about any of these grasses. They all have limitations and none of them are the end all be all! **Lastly, remember that no lawn care program can make turf grow where it doesn't want to be!**