

# Warm Season Turfgrasses

## Bermudagrass

There are more commercially available varieties of improved bermudagrass than ever before. You can choose from several improved seed propagated bermudagrasses in addition to many good vegetative varieties. High-quality certified seed is available in the hulled or unhulled form.

Bermudagrass has medium fine to fine leaf texture, high density, heat and drought tolerance, salinity and flooding tolerance in addition to wear tolerance and recuperative capacity. It does require more nitrogen fertilization than most other warm season turfgrasses, and it is subject to winter kill in the transition zone areas.

The following are some of the newer seeded bermudagrass varieties and their characteristics.

■ NuMex Sahara is a recent release from New Mexico State University. It is shorter growing and denser than Common bermudagrass, and it has excellent drought tolerance. The variety, which is distributed by Farmers Marketing Corp., is intended as a general purpose turfgrass for warm, tropical and subtropical regions.

■ Guymon was released by Oklahoma State University. It is very cold tolerant and somewhat coarser in texture than Common.

■ Sonesta is an O.M. Scott & Sons Co. variety that is expected to be available later in 1992. It is similar to the experimental strain tested in the National Test as NM S-3. This variety is denser, shorter growing and has rated better than Common in turfgrass quality.

You can obtain commercially a number of other seed propagated bermudagrass varieties, but there is little performance data available. In addition, several other experimental seeded varieties are being tested.

There are also many vegetatively propagated bermudagrass varieties available for sprigging and sodding.

*Technical Credit: Arden Baltensperger, Director of Turfgrass Research, Farmer's Marketing Corp. and Emeritus Professor, New Mexico State University.*

## Other Warm Season Turfgrasses

There are several other warm season turfgrasses that are used in certain pockets of the United States.

■ Centipedegrass is sometimes referred to as *poor man's grass* because it requires such little maintenance. It has an especially low fertility requirement. Centipedegrass is adapted to the Southern U.S. It is established either vegetatively or by seed.

■ Kikuyugrass is a coarse-textured grass that is adapted to warm, humid tropical regions. It is aggressive and grows well in Mexico, Southern California and Hawaii.

■ Buffalograss has gained popularity as a low maintenance turfgrass for moderate to low traffic areas. Several improved seeded and vegetatively propagated buffalograss varieties are now available. It does well in low traffic areas with reduced fertilization and mowing.

■ Bahiagrass is a coarse-textured grass that is adapted to southern coastal areas. It is used primarily for low-quality, low-maintenance turf-grass areas.

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## Zoysiagrass

Zoysiagrass forms a dense, hardy turf that endures both high temperatures and humidity. It survives and even thrives with minimal maintenance. There also are zoysiagrass cultivars that show winter hardiness well into traditional cool season turf zones. However, zoysiagrasses grow slowly and the turf density makes it more difficult to maintain with a rotary mower. Zoysiagrass may be desirable for specialty use where you need a dense, slow-growing turf. You can establish zoysiagrass from plugs, sprigs, sod or seed. However, because of its slow growth rate, consider sodding for spring repair.

Meyer and Emerald are older, widely used cultivars. Newer cultivars tend to be less dense and retain better color in cool temperature.

■ El Toro is a *Zoysia japonica* that is adapted to Southern California, the South and into the transition zone. It is not as winter hardy as Meyer. It has broader leaves, is more open and spreads faster. In areas where it is adapted, it greens up quicker in the spring and maintains color longer in the fall.

■ Belair is similar in cold tolerance to Meyer, but it has broader leaves and better rust resistance. It also spreads better and has good fall color retention. It is a popular cultivar in Texas.

■ Cashmere is a dwarf, dense zoysiagrass. It has the finest leaf and is the densest of the zoysiagrasses. Cashmere is adapted to the South, so it winter kills in freezing temperatures.

■ Korean common currently is the only seeded zoysiagrass available. It has a coarse texture and moderate shade tolerance. It's not as dense as Meyer and it is adapted as far north as the upper transition zone. Researchers are working with several new varieties of seeded zoysiagrass, which are expected to be released in the near future.

Sodding, plugging, sprigging and hydrostolonizing remain the most popular methods of renovating zoysiagrass turf.

*Technical Credit: Jack Murray, Turfgrass Germplasm Services, Inc., Bradenton, FL.*

## St. Augustinegrass

Although it is coarse-textured, St. Augustinegrass is shade-tolerant and easy to mow. It thrives in warm, humid areas of the South and coastal United States. St. Augustinegrass produces good-looking turf in shady areas where other warm season turfgrasses fail to thrive.

St. Augustinegrass is established vegetatively with sod, plugs or sprigs. Its stolons spread rapidly, so it can cover an area quickly.

The chinch bug remains one of St. Augustinegrass's primary pests. Newer varieties are resistant to the chinch bug, have finer leaf texture and have better color retention.

■ Floratam has been the most popular of the St. Augustinegrasses. Its resistance to chinch bug attacks made it popular in the late 1970s and 1980s. However, it is not as shade-tolerant or cold-tolerant as some other varieties.

■ Seville is a dwarf variety. It has a finer leaf texture, producing a smoother looking turf. However, it is susceptible to chinch bug problems.

■ Delmar has moderate cold tolerance. It is adapted north to the Gulf states and into Texas. It greens up faster after cold snaps and retains its color longer after the temperature drops.

■ FX-10 is a newly released variety that has enhanced drought resistance. It has good shade tolerance and a more upright growth habit.

*Technical Credits: John Wildmon, Lake City Community College; Virgil Meier, O.M. Scott.*