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***Establishment
and
Management
Guide to
NaTurf^{brand}
Buffalograss***



from Native Turf Group



Establishing Your New NaTurf^{brand} Buffalograss Lawn

1 Preparation for Planting is the Key to Success

- ❖ **Sunlight:** Buffalograss does best in areas receiving at least 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight per day.
- ❖ **Soil Type:** Buffalograss will grow in most all soil types except for course textured sand based soils.
- ❖ **Drainage:** Buffalograss does not tolerate standing water for extended periods of time. It is recommended to correct drainage problems prior seeding.
- ❖ **Soil Fertility and pH:** A soil test will provide you with all the information necessary to adjust your soil's fertility level for optimum establishment and growth for your buffalograss lawn. The soil should contain a minimum level of 65 lbs./acre (75 kg/hectare) phosphorous and 200 lbs./acre (225 kg/hectare) Potassium prior to planting. Do not apply Nitrogen if the soil test is in excess of 25 lbs./acre (28 kg/hectare). In the early stages of buffalograss germination and establishment only weeds will benefit from higher levels of Nitrogen. The pH of your soil is also an important consideration. The optimum level for your lawn is between 6.0 and 7.5. It is necessary to correct the pH prior to planting since these type amendments need to be incorporated into the soil to become effective. Your local cooperative extension service can provide you with access to soil testing, recommendations, and proper methods to apply these soil amendments.
- ❖ **Lawn History:** One aspect that is frequently overlooked when planning a new yard is what herbicides have been applied to the area in the last 12 to 18 months. If pre-emergent herbicides have been frequently used in the past, you will need to check the residual effect on the label of the particular herbicide. These pre-emergent herbicides are designed to inhibit the germination of weeds but they also can inhibit the germination of your new grass. Your local cooperative extension service can provide assistance in making this determination.
- ❖ **Planting Date:** Buffalograss seed should be planted during the spring and summer months once the soil temperature has reached 60°F (16°C) and is on the rise. Spring plantings are generally best because the higher frequency of precipitation would reduce the irrigation requirements to maintain a moist soil. The "cutoff" date for planting depends upon your geographic location. A simple rule to follow is not to plant within 75 days of the average first frost date for your location. The newly established plants must have time to develop adequate rooting prior to the first frost.

2 Recommended Seeding Rates

Application	Recommended Planting Rate*	Approximate Number of Seeds	
		Square Foot	Square Meter
Residential Lawns	2 - 3 lbs/1000 sq. ft (1 – 1.5 kg/100 sq. m)	70 - 105	750 - 1100
Golf Courses	90 - 130 lbs./acre (100 – 150 kg/hect)	70 to 105	750 - 1100
Soil Stabilization	150 lbs./acre (170 kg/hect)	120	1270
Industrial sites	45 - 90 lbs./ acre (50 – 100 kg/hect)	35 to 70	375 - 750

*Increasing the seeding rate will generally reduce establishment time.

3 Seedbed Preparation Choices

❖ Preparing a Tilled Seedbed

A properly prepared seedbed is the foundation to success when establishing buffalograss from seed. Soils, especially those high in clay content or which have been compacted, require tillage to a depth of 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 cm) to promote healthy rooting as the buffalograss becomes established. Following deep tillage, the soil needs to be worked to a garden-like appearance. Rake and remove all large plant debris. Once the clods have been worked down to no larger than pea size, the soil needs to be firmed with a roller or rake to a point where the foot sinks to no more than ½ inch (1.2 cm). Prior to seeding, be sure all existing vegetation has been destroyed by tillage or a non-selective herbicide. If a herbicide is used follow the manufacturer's recommended rates provided on the label.

❖ Renovating Cool Season Grass Lawn

High maintenance cool-season grass lawns can be quickly and successfully converted to lower maintenance buffalograss without extensive tillage as described above. Renovation rather than complete tillage can reduce costs and time for establishment. The most effective method for removing the existing turf is 2 sequential applications of a nonselective herbicide such as Roundup Pro. Apply the first application, wait 14 days and reapply the same rate. The seedbed can be prepared 7 days following the last application of herbicide. Use a vertical mower or mechanical rake to remove the thatch. Two or three operations in different directions are most effective. Mow or rake off the debris after the dethatching process. The old turf can then be spiked, cored, or vertically mowed. These operations can also be used to incorporate lime and fertilizer into the soil.

4 Putting the Seed into the Soil

- ❖ Once you have determined your seeding rate and prepared the seedbed correctly you are ready to begin planting the seed. The size of your installation will determine what equipment you will need to carefully place the seed at the optimum depth. Small lawns are best planted by broadcasting the seed across the surface, followed by raking to incorporate the seed into the soil, and finally rolling the surface to get good seed-to-soil contact. On larger installations, various types of seeders and drills are available. Seeders that limit the depth of seed placement are best. **The most critical factor to remember in any buffalograss seeding is not to place the seed deeper than ½ inch (1.2 cm) from the soil surface.** Best placement is between ¼ and ½ inch (0.6 to 1.2 cm) below the soil surface. It is not unusual for a small number of seeds to remain on the soil surface after planting.

5 Watering is Essential for Good Germination

- ❖ The frequency and quantity of supplemental watering during establishment is critical. Frequent and excessive watering promotes rooting problems and promotes unnecessary weed growth. The soil needs to be moist prior to seeding and this moisture needs to be maintained for germination. Once the seeding process is completed, water every day the first week, every other day the second week, and every third day the next week. Do not water to the point of runoff. Seedlings should start to germinate in 10 to 14 days. Begin reducing the frequency of watering but increase the amount per application as the seedlings develop into small plants and then to a mature sod.

6 Controlling Weeds Quickens the Establishment Process

- ❖ Proper establishment practices will help to reduce weed competition, but weeds will most likely be the single most limiting factor in establishing a new stand of grass quickly. Weeds compete for moisture, nutrients, and space. If left unmanaged weeds can severely damage a developing stand of buffalograss. Mowing during establishment will decrease the competitiveness of some taller growing weeds. Mowing just above the height of the buffalograss in the first 4 to 5 weeks will keep the canopy of grass exposed to sunlight and allow it to grow. Limited information is available on herbicide safety and use in the establishment phase of buffalograss. Drive 75F herbicide has shown good flexibility for new buffalograss seedlings as it is labeled to apply any time before or after seeding but must be applied by a commercial applicator. New products will continually be labeled for buffalograss as the popularity of the grass increases. Consult your local garden center or County Extension Agent for updated herbicide recommendations. Always consult the label of any pesticide product prior to its use.

Managing Your New Buffalograss Lawn

1 NaTurf_{brand} Buffalograsses Offer Several Mowing Options

- ❖ The new buffalograss will reach a mature height of 4 to 6 inches (10 to 15 cm). The recommended mowing height varies from 1.5 to 4 inches (4 to 10 cm) depending on the intensity of management and the desired appearance. Buffalograss can be mowed from only once a year to once every two weeks there again depending on the appearance desired. Mowing frequency is directly related to the amount of water and fertilizer applied. The key to a great looking lawn is to avoid removing more than one-third of the turf height at any one mowing. A reduction in mowing height will increase the frequency of mowing and the intensity of the management, i.e. watering and fertilizer. In most turf applications, turf quality is enhanced with more frequent mowing with minimal leaf clipping.

2 NaTurf_{brand} Buffalograsses Require Less Fertilizer Than Other Grasses

- ❖ The recommended rate of annual nitrogen application is 1 to 3 lbs. of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet (1 – 2 kg/100 sq m) split into two applications. Slow-release nitrogen fertilizers are the best source of nitrogen since they prevent rapid lush growth. The first application of nitrogen should be made approximately 3 weeks following 'greenup' and then 8 weeks later. Excessive nitrogen fertilization of buffalograss increases weed pressure and mowing thus defeating the purpose of a low-maintenance turfgrass. Phosphorous and potassium should be maintained at adequate levels to ensure root growth and overall improved turfgrass quality. Test the soil every three years to identify any nutrient problems and correct accordingly.

3 NaTurf_{brand} Buffalograsses Requires Less Water Than Other Grasses

- ❖ The water requirements for buffalograss are considerably less than other turfgrass species. Excessive irrigation creates weed pressure, increased mowing, and disease susceptibility. In most cases natural precipitation provides adequate moisture for growth, but timely supplemental irrigation will enhance the turf quality. In periods of extended drought, supplemental irrigation may become a necessity to prevent drought-induced dormancy. If irrigation becomes necessary it is best to water deeply and infrequently for a healthy turf.

4 Weed Prevention for a Healthy Turf

- ❖ Applying good turf management practices can prevent many of the common weeds. Avoid frequent watering, over fertilizing, and scalping as these practices promote weed growth and put your buffalograss at a competitive disadvantage. Unfortunately good management practices only reduce the weed competition and do not eliminate them. Hand weeding is always an option but is very time consuming and labor intensive. Herbicides are commonly used to aid the turf manager in promoting a healthy weed-free turf. When used in accordance with the manufacturer's label these products are safe and very effective. If you are uncomfortable or inexperienced in the use of pesticides it is best to have the products applied by a licensed and reputable lawn care service. For those who want to do their own application the following is brief outline of the products available and their intended use.

❖ Herbicides Currently Labeled for Use on Buffalograss

Pre-emergent Herbicides Labeled for Buffalograss

Trade name	Common Name	Company	Use
Barricade 65 WG	prodiamine	Syngenta	Apply to established turfgrass only
Plateau	imazameth	BASF	Not labeled for residential lawn use
Pendulum 3.3 EC	pendimethalin	BASF	Apply to established turfgrass only
Dimension	dithiopyr	Dow AgroSciences	Pre-emerge and post-emerge use
Ronstar G	oxadiazon	Aventis	Apply to established turfgrass only
Surflan A.S.	oryzalin	Dow AgroSciences	Apply to established turfgrass only
Gallery 75	isoxaben	Dow AgroSciences	Apply to established turfgrass only
Drive 75DF	quinclorac	BASF	Labeled for residential use but can be applied only by Commercial Applicators

Post-emergent Herbicides Labeled for Buffalograss

Trade name	Common Name	Company	Use
Confront	triclopyr + clopyralid	Dow AgroSciences	Apply to established turfgrass only
Lontrel	clopyralid	Dow AgroSciences	Apply to established turfgrass only
MSMA products	MSMA	Various companies	Apply to established turfgrass only
Trimec* type products	2, 4-D + Dicamba	Various companies	Apply to established turfgrass only
Roundup Pro	glyphosate	Monsanto	Non-selective herbicide for dormant use

*2,4-D products should not be applied when the air temperature is above 75°F (24°C) and when wind speeds exceed 5 MPH (8 km/hr). Unacceptable Injury to the turf and to non-target plants may result.

ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURER'S LABEL PRIOR TO USE