

Buffalograss Lawn

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Buffalograss is a Kansas native warm-season prairie grass. It grows best in full sun. An acceptable lawn can be achieved with a minimum of 6 to 8 hours per day of direct sunlight.

Soil Requirements

The soil pH determined by a [soil test](#) should be between 6 to 8. A well-drained loam soil is best. Sandy soils, wet areas and poorly drained soils generally are unsuited for buffalograss. A clay soil will grow buffalograss when there is sufficient slope to move surface water.

Establishing Buffalograss

A buffalograss lawn can be started by sowing seeds, plugs or sod. Seeds will contain both male and female plants. The male plants will send up pollen heads which may or may not be desirable. Female only plugs or sod can be selected that would not produce the male pollen which could lead to less mowing. Buffalograss spreads by stolons which are above ground stems that will root when in contact with soil.

K-State Recommended Buffalograss Varieties

Seeded types: Tantaka, Cody (both have some resistance to Chinch bug) Bison, Plains, Top Gun, Texoka, Sharps Improved

Vegetative types: Prestige (some resistance to Chinch bug), Legacy, Prairie, Buffalawn

Recommended turf varieties [website](#).

Planting Time

Summer time is preferred meaning June through July for seeding, plugs and sod. Seed will germinate in about a week after mid-June, where as earlier planting may require 2 to 3 weeks due to cooler soil temperatures. When irrigation is not available, April or May seeding is suggested to take advantage of spring rainfall for seed germination.

Seeding Buffalograss

Buffalograss seed burrs should be planted at a rate of 1 to 3 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Seed-

ing at the higher recommended rate should provide complete lawn coverage in one season. Seed burrs should be planted at a depth of 1/2 inch or less. Grooves can be made in the soil to receive seed using a verticutting machine or with a slicer-seeder machine that opens grooves in the soil and then deposits seed during one operation. It is important to use burrs that have been primed for germination by soaking in potassium nitrate to weaken the coat. Burrs may also be broadcast on the prepared seedbed using a box (drop) fertilizer spreader. Hulled, deburred seed is sometimes available but is much more expensive than burrs. Rake broadcast burrs into the soil surface and then roll or irrigate heavy to ensure good burr-to-soil contact.

Presoaking Seed

The benefits of doing this are to speed germination, uniform emergence (5-6 days) and less water required. A challenge is that once the process has begun, planting must occur within 3 days.

1. Soak the seed for up to 3 days only. Seed soaked for longer may germinate in the process and make seed unusable.
2. Prepare the seedbed and be ready to plant anytime during those 3 days. If inclement weather is likely at the time you intend to plant, the soak should be cut short and the seed planted.
3. Place the seed in a porous bag and submerge in a container of water.
4. Dump the container of water, allow the sack of seeds to drain and then refill with fresh water every 24 hours. (Maximum of 3 days.)
5. Drain the seeds for up to 5 hours prior to planting. The drained seed needs to be planted and will flow through a broadcast spreader or seeder.
6. Irrigate immediately after seeding so that seed is not allowed to dry.

Plugging Buffalograss

Purchased plugs is another method for establishing buffalograss. Plugs may be planted on 6-inch to 24-inch centers, depending on how fast coverage is needed. Plugs can be taken out of established buffalograss to be used to increase coverage. Plugs should be at least 2 inches in diameter and 2-1/2 inches deep. Pre-rooted plugs that have been allowed to develop roots in pots for several weeks are preferred and will establish more rapidly than plugs that are not pre-rooted.

Sodding Buffalograss

Soil preparation is the same for all methods of planting buffalograss. Sod should be installed as soon as possible upon acquisition. Roll or water heavily to get good soil to root contact. Sod may be cut and used like plugs.

See publication [Planting Your Lawn](#), MF-608.

Fertilizing

Nitrogen is the most important fertilizer element, and it is needed on a yearly basis. Phosphorous, potassium, lime or sulfur should be applied only according to [soil test results](#) prior to planting.

Fertilize buffalograss during its active growth cycle. June is the best time to fertilize, when stolon growth begins. A second application can be applied a month later in July. Up to 2 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet per season is suggested.

See publication [Lawn Fertilizing Guide](#), MF-2916.

Weed Control

Weeds are the primary challenge in growing a buffalograss lawn. First use best management practices for a healthy stand of buffalograss. There are herbicides labeled for use on buffalograss. Potential *Pre-emergent herbicides*: benefin (Balan), bensulide, (Bensulide), dithiopyr (Dimension), imazapic (Plateau), isoxaben (Gallery, Portrait), oxadiazon (Ronstar), pendimethalin, proflam (Barricade).

Post emergent herbicides: clopyralid, mesotrione (Tenacity), metsulfuron (Manor), quinclorac (Drive), sulfentrazone, triclopyr.

One effective method of controlling winter and early spring weeds in buffalograss is to apply a glyphosate product such as Roundup, when the buffalograss is dormant. Glyphosate will work best when applied during the mid-day with air temperature above 55 degrees. Weeds need to be green and not moisture stressed. Apply glyphosate as a light mist and only on those spots where the

weeds are growing. Glyphosate applied too heavily will move down onto the crown of buffalograss and if any greening has occurred will likely kill it. Do not apply glyphosate once buffalograss begins to show signs of spring green-up.

[Crabgrass](#) and other annual grassy weeds can be prevented by applying preemergence herbicides before the redbud trees reach full bloom or the redbud leaves begin to emerge. Good cultural practices also are effective in reducing crabgrass and annual grassy weeds. Do not depend on herbicides alone for weed control. Many preemergent herbicides for turf are labeled for buffalograss. Corn gluten products and proflam (Barricade) are slower to activate so follow label directions.

The herbicide quinclorac may be used to manage germinated crabgrass in newly planted grass and established stands.

Dandelions, chickweed and henbit should be controlled in September and October. Spring applications are less effective and don't give lasting results. Do not use most broadleaf weed killers for one month before seeding, or on new grass until it has been mowed three times. Watch [clover](#) management video. [Yellow nutsedge](#) is a weed that may require the use of halosulfuron or sulfentrazone to control.

See publication [Weed Control In Home Lawns](#), MF-2385

Mowing

Buffalograss is a naturally short-growing grass with a maximum height of 8 inches. Buffalograss lawns can be mowed to 3 to 4 inches to remove the slender male flower stalks that develop above the height of the leaves in seeded cultivars. This may require regular mowing, since the male flowers are continually produced. Female cultivar selections may require less mowing, since the female flower is found in the canopy.

A buffalograss turf can be given a uniform appearance by mowing at 2.5 inches every three to four weeks in late spring and early fall and every two to three weeks later in the summer. These lower heights will require more frequent mowing and increased management to maintain quality.

Mowing management influences the amount of supplemental water needed to maintain a green turf and good stand quality. Minimal mowing and higher cutting heights will allow buffalograss to maintain a vigorous root system. Removing more than one-third of the leaf material will reduce root activity and growth, making plants more suscepti-

ble to stresses. Do not cut the grass by more than one-third its total height at any one mowing. Buffalograss may require edging along walks, driveways, shrubs and flower beds due to aggressive stolon development. [Clippings](#) return nitrogen and other nutrients to the soil and do not cause thatch. Put clippings on the turf, even those that may fall in the street or other hard surfaces.

Keep the blade sharp at all times. As a guide, sharpen [blade](#) after every 10 hours of use.

See publication [Mowing Your Lawn](#), MF-1155

Watering

The most beneficial time to [water](#) buffalograss is during June, July and August when drought is most severe. That is when peak growth and stolon production occurs. Avoid spring [watering](#) unless there is a drought condition since weeds benefit greatly with watering. A good soaking at the end of a dry fall will help keep the roots and crown healthy over the winter. Morning watering is desired with less wind and evaporation. Apply the water at a rate that can be absorbed by the soil.

[Sprinklers](#) vary in how fast they apply water; they can be checked by placing several flat-bottomed, straight-sided containers on the lawn and then turning on the water for an hour. The average height, in inches, of water collected in the containers is the rate at which the sprinklers apply water in inches per hour. By performing this test, it can always be determined how long to run a sprinkler to apply a given amount of water.

See publication [Watering Your Lawn](#), MF-2059

Disease

[Dollar spot](#) may cause circular spots in buffalograss. Dollar spot is rarely serious enough on home lawns to require fungicide treatments.

Insects

[Chinch bugs](#) have been found injuring buffalograss in Riley County. They injure the grass by withdrawing sap from plant tissues in the crown area. While feeding, they also may inject a salivary toxin that damages plant tissues and inhibits the translocation of water and nutrients. Initially, this feeding results in reddish-purple discoloration of the leaves. Damage appears as patchy areas which turn yellow and dry to a straw-brown color.

Insecticide efficacy trials conducted at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln indicate that bifenthrin (Talstar, Ortho Bug-B-Gon), lambda-cyhalothrin (Spectracide Triazicide), or carbaryl (Sevin) applied in 3 to 5 gallons of water per 1,000 square feet, should provide acceptable

chinch bug control. Typical treatment time is mid-June and if needed in late July.

Before a spray treatment, mow the turf to a height of 1.5 inches and remove clippings. This will reduce interference of the insecticide to the insects. Irrigate the treated area with 1/8 inch of water to move the product down into the plant crown and thatch.

If using a granular insecticide, irrigate the turf with at least 1/4 inch of water to activate the insecticide.

[Buffalograss](#) sod webworm has not been documented in Riley County.

Always read and follow label directions carefully when using pesticides. Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Publications from Kansas State University are available on the World Wide Web at:

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