

Blue Grama and Buffalograss Installation



For a low-growing, drought-tolerant, turf-like stand of grass, consider using a blue grama-buffalograss mix. Buffalograss fills in to cover the soil, while blue grama gives the stand height. This mix uses 50 percent less water than bluegrass, is more heat and drought tolerant, requires less mowing and fertilizing, and does not need winter watering .

Consider other grasses where a stand taller than 12 inches is desired.

These instructions can also be used for installing blue grama by itself.

Buffalograss lawns are usually planted from plugs or sod, rather than seed.

Vegetation removal

Existing lawn and weeds must be removed before planting. Be careful of disturbing the roots of existing trees and shrubs. Vegetation can be removed using the following methods:

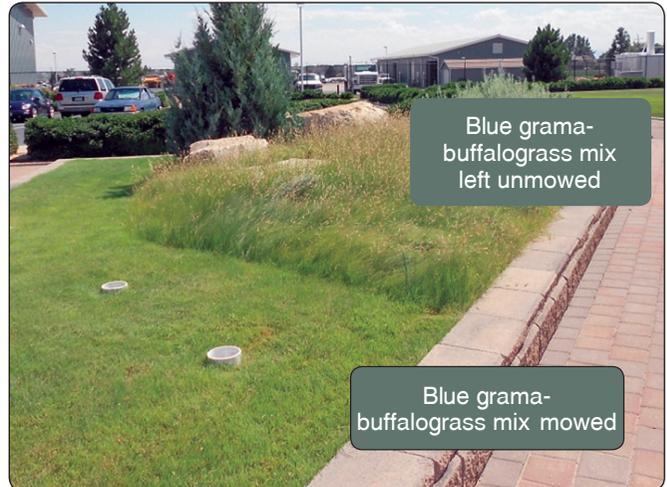
- Remove vegetation by hand shoveling.
- Spray with glyphosate and tilling the dead material into the soil.
- Spray with glyphosate, leave dead grass in place, heavily core aerate before seeding.
- Use a sod cutter.

Soil preparation

- Till to break up soil compaction.
- Buffalograss and blue grama do not require high levels of organic matter in the soil. Adding organic soil amendments (compost, manure, etc.) is generally not necessary.
- Roll area if soil is loose and fluffy when dry.

Seeding

- Large areas should be seeded with a grass drill seeder equipped to plant native grass seed. Hydroseeding and broadcast seeding are less successful because the seed sits on top of the soil rather than in the soil at the proper depth.



- Small areas can be seeded by hand. After the rototilling is complete, rake the area to final grade. Roll if necessary. Broadcast seed with a drop seeder or by hand. Rake the area again to work the seed into the soil. Mulch is unnecessary if you are seeding at the right time of year.
- Do not apply pre-emergent herbicide (crabgrass preventer).
- Seeding at the right time of year is critical to success. Optimal seeding time is June 1 to July 15. Warm season grasses germinate best when the soil is very warm (above 55 degrees). Seeding too early, when the soil is cool, will cause poor germination of the grass and allow weeds to invade rapidly. Seeding too late will not allow grass seedlings to grow enough to withstand the winter.
- Recommended rate: 3 to 5 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet.
- High quality seed is very important. Consult Colorado State University's recommended seed sources at csuturf.colostate.edu.

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Germination

- Water 2 to 3 times per day with a short sprinkler run time (1 to 5 minutes) to keep the top 1 to 2 inches of soil constantly moist.
- Seedlings will emerge in 7 to 21 days.
- After most seed has germinated, cut back the frequency of irrigation, increase the run time. See long-term maintenance below.

Easy care through the end of summer

- Do not use weed killers containing 2,4-D.
- Do use weed killers labeled safe for buffalograss, containing metasulfuron, carfentrazone and/or quinclorac, and others (Ally, Drive 75DF, Quicksilver).
- For more information about herbicides, visit cmg.colostate.edu.
- Do apply lawn fertilizer 3 weeks after seed germinates. Do not use a fertilizer containing “weed and feed.”
- Mow occasionally once the grass reaches 4 to 6 inches tall to encourage the grass to fill in and control and weeds.

Long-term maintenance

Water

- Begin watering in mid-late May.
- Apply half-inch to three-quarters inch of irrigation per week to maintain a green appearance.
- If irrigation is not available, the grass will turn brown and go dormant, but will not die.
- Stop watering first week in October.
- Do not winter water.

Fertilize

- Apply one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet with a lawn fertilizer in June and/or July, for a total of one to two pounds of nitrogen over the growing season.
- Do not use a fertilizer containing weed and feed.

Mow

- Mow as little as one time per year in late February. You can mow more often (one time per month) if a shorter appearance is desired.
- Blue grama will produce seed heads in August. These can be left standing for winter interest or mowed off after they appear.

Control weeds

- Spot spray broadleaf weeds and annual weedy grasses.
- Do not assume traditional weed killers are safe for buffalograss and blue grama.
- Use weed killers labeled as safe for buffalograss (Dimension, Ally, etc.).

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