

Alternative Turf: Buffalograss



Are you looking for a replacement for your traditional lawn? Are you considering a native grass that requires less water and maintenance? Buffalograss is an excellent native grass options for lawn-like spaces. Below is information that describes the main points to consider when evaluating buffalograss.



Benefits

- Buffalograss is probably the best native grass option to achieve a traditional lawn-like look.
- It can make an attractive lawn, but will not be quite as thick as a traditional Kentucky bluegrass lawn. It will also be a lighter green color.
- It can be mowed to 2-inch height or left unmowed (will be 3 to 6 inches tall).



Water savings

- Buffalograss saves a great deal of water, requiring about one-third to one-half the water of a traditional Kentucky bluegrass lawn.
- Requires 1 to 2 inches of water every two to four weeks in mid-summer (May through September) to maintain a good appearance. This equates to about 8 to 10 inches over the growing season. Kentucky bluegrass requires about 25 inches
- Since winter watering is not required, you can save additional water from November through April.
- Requires regular watering for several weeks after planting while it forms new roots. In other words, you will not save water until the grass has grown a new root system during the first growing season.



Buffalograss



Don't use if ...

- Your yard is too shady. Buffalograss requires at least 6 hours of sun to grow well.
- The soil is sandy, rocky, or very well-drained. The soil must have some clay content for buffalograss to perform well.
- The site is above 6,500 feet in elevation.
- Your yard experiences a lot of foot traffic. Buffalograss will thin where traffic is constant or concentrated.

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Considerations

- Weed invasion is the most common frustration. Even though watering and mowing is reduced, controlling the weeds, especially during establishment, requires some work. By installing buffalograss with plugs, you can simultaneously apply a weed preventer to help control weed invasion during installation. Installing sod, though expensive, eliminates the weed invasion problem.
- Buffalograss can survive without any watering, but may turn brown (go dormant) during extended dry spells without supplemental water.
- Greens up in mid May, turns brown (goes dormant) in early October, so it's not green for as many months as a traditional lawn.
- New varieties (the ones that look good as a lawn) don't grow well from seed. It's best to start them from sod or plugs.
- Cultivars available as seed tend to be developed for pastures, rangeland, or reclamation projects. If you choose to use seed, be sure to use "primed" or "treated" seed to get better seed germination.



Installation

- Newer varieties form a dense, attractive lawn.
- Choose a cultivar that works well on Colorado's Front Range. Legacy, Prestige and Turffalo have proven to be cultivars that produce a high quality lawn and are quite winter hardy in Colorado. Other varieties often suffer from winter kill.
- Best time to plant plugs or sod (recommended method): May 15 to August 15
- Best time to seed: late May to August 1
- For more information from Colorado State University on buffalograss selection, installation and management, visit ext.colostate.edu.

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