

Buffalograss Pasture Seed

Buffalograss

Seed (*Buchloë dactyloides*) is the only grass native to North America that is used widely for pastures, lawn and turf applications. Fossils discovered in Kansas show that buffalograss existed in that region at least 7 million years ago. It was the principal forage grass for the American bison, hence the name. Buffalograss is well adapted to the drylands of the western prairies and plains, and in recent years new varieties have been developed to extend its natural area of adaptation.

Buffalograss is a warm-season grass that spreads by aboveground stems called stolons. Reproduction is dioecious -- female and male flowers are located on separate plants. Seedheads on male plants are located high in the turfgrass canopy, while female seedheads are found near the base of the plant. Because male flowers extend above the canopy in unmowed turf, selecting a cultivar with both male and female plants can be an aesthetic consideration. The female burrs, or protective shells, each containing one or more seeds, are difficult to harvest because of their location deep in the turfgrass canopy. For this reason buffalograss seed is more expensive than the seed of most other turfgrass species.

Buffalograss adapts best to full sun, but acceptable turf can be grown with 6 to 8 hours per day of direct sunlight. It is one of the most heat and drought tolerant of turfgrass species. During extended dry periods without moisture, buffalograss goes dormant to avoid drought stress and will remain dormant until moisture is available. Buffalograss has better cold tolerance than other warm-season turfgrasses, but the degree of cold tolerance varies among cultivars. For more information on Buffalo grass please call or contact us.

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Pasture and Erosion Applications

New Pastures - Plant 40 - 60 lbs. per acre

Erosion Areas - Plant 40 - 60 lbs. per acre

Establishment

Buffalograss may be seeded or it may be vegetatively established using either sod or plugs or both, depending on the cultivar. Seeded

cultivars will have both male and female flowers, while sodded types are predominantly female.

The best time to plant is late spring or early summer, although sod and plugs may be planted as late as August or early September, assuming that the weather remains warm enough for a root system to develop before winter. Success with a late-summer planting also depends on cold hardiness of individual cultivars.

Seeding

Buffalograss seed burs should be planted at a rate of 1 to 3 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Seeding at the higher recommended rate should provide complete lawn coverage in one season. Seed burs 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. Gently rake broadcast burrs into the soil surface and then roll to ensure good burr-to-soil contact.

After seeding, straw or other mulch may be applied at a rate of one bale per 1,000 square feet. Lightly water the seedbed daily when there is no rain. As seedlings emerge and develop, irrigate less frequently but often enough to prevent drought stress. Mow seedlings at a height of 2 to 3 inches when the new seedlings have reached a height of 3 inches. Try to remove no more than one-third of the vertical growth at each mowing. About six weeks after seeding, apply a slow release nitrogen fertilizer at a rate of 1 pound nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

Patience and perseverance are often the key to establishing a buffalograss lawn. Buffalograss does not germinate as a dense stand like tall fescue. One seedling per square foot is adequate because buffalograss becomes progressively thicker each year as the stolons spread. During the first and second years, persistent attention to weed control may be required. Weeds may be removed by hand or by spot spraying with Roundup.

Keys to weed control in buffalograss

- Avoid frequent irrigation. Water only as needed to maintain desired buffalograss quality.
- Avoid overfertilization with nitrogen.
- For chemical weed control, use only products labeled for buffalograss

- Control crabgrass with annual applications of approved preemergence chemicals.

- Do

not use 2,4-D on buffalograss during the first year of establishment or when temperature exceeds 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Fall applications are preferred for control of broadleaf weeds in buffalograss.

Managing established buffalograss

Buffalograss is a low maintenance grass and will fail if overmanaged. Established buffalograss requires only 1 or 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year. Select a fertilizer with a nitrogen-to-phosphorus-to-potassium ratio of 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 and at least 35 percent slow-release nitrogen. Apply fertilizer at a rate of 1 pound nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in June and repeat the application in late July or early August.

Irrigate buffalograss only enough to maintain growth and prevent dormancy, if desired. Buffalograss will survive extended drought but will lose color as it enters dormancy. Overwatering will promote weed competition and may increase the incidence of disease.

There are several options for mowing buffalograss. Where moderate to high quality turf is desired, mow once per week at a height of 2 to 3 inches. For low-maintenance areas mow at 3 to 4 inches every three to four weeks. Buffalograss may also be left unmowed except for an annual spring mowing at 3 to 4 inches to remove old growth.

Annual weeds may be controlled with spring applications of pre-emergence herbicides labeled for use on buffalograss such as Dacthal, Dimension, Ronstar G and Surflan. Other preemergence herbicides may give equally effective annual weed control. Broadleaf weeds, including dandelions and plaintains, may be controlled with any of several products that contain 2,4-D and are labeled for buffalograss. For control of winter annual weeds and invasive cool-season grasses like Kentucky bluegrass, spray Roundup on dormant buffalograss in winter before greenup begins.

Courtesy of <http://extension.missouri.edu>