

PLANTING BERMUDA GRASS

When to Plant: Bermuda grass is a warm season turf grass. Plant Bermuda grass seeds in spring and summer when soil temperatures are consistently above 65° F (18° C). The optimum soil temperature for germination and root growth of Bermuda grass is 75° to 80° F (24° to 27° C) - Higher temps are ok, provided moisture is maintained.

- **Site Selection:** Plant Bermuda grass in full sun on well-drained soil. Proper drainage is essential for successful establishment and the development of mature healthy turf.
- **Soil Test:** Prior to seeding, a soil test is recommended. Apply fertilizer and other amendments per test. Add lime as needed to establish a minimum 6.0 soil pH. A lawn starter fertilizer is an ideal choice to apply prior to planting.
- **Seedbed Preparation:** Loosen soil to a depth of six inches (15 cm). Level area to proper grade with approximately .5 inches (14 mm) pulverized soil at the surface. Rake smooth prior to planting. Do NOT use any herbicides or weed & feed fertilizers during planting. You must allow a period of 10-14 weeks prior to, and 10-14 weeks after seeding date in which NO herbicides or weed & feeds can be applied. Keep area mowed frequently to control weeds.

Seeding Rate for New Turf Applications: Plant 2 to 3 pounds of Bermuda grass seed (coated seed) per 1000 square feet (1 kg/100 square meters) for new turf applications. More seed may be needed when stands are established early or late in the season to ensure full coverage. The planting rate for lawns is much higher, than for pastures, due to the desire to have a higher plant population per square foot in laws. This works to create a dense turf when mowed.

Planting: Care must be taken not to cover the seed with too much soil – no more than ¼ inch of soil covering the seed is recommended. However the seeds **MUST** have proper soil coverage (ideally 1/8 inch) for good germination to occur. Effective planting methods include broadcasting by hand, using seed spreaders, and hydro-seeding – Rake or drag planted areas to provide soil coverage over seeds. If over-seeding, aerate prior to seeding. Do **NOT** use herbicides when seeding 10-14 weeks before, during or after planting date for seeds.

- **Watering:** Soil moisture around the seed must be maintained for about 1 to 3 weeks. The seedbed must be kept moist during germination. Once established, provide less frequent, deep waterings to encourage deep root growth.
- **Germination:** Bermuda grass has very good seedling vigor. Under ideal conditions, germination begins within 7 to 10 days. Again, soil moisture must be maintained during the germination period. Allow 14 to 18 days after the first seedlings emerge for complete germination.
- **Establishment Time:** Under ideal conditions, full coverage is attained 6 to 10 weeks after seeding. If planting is early or late in the season, more time may be needed for establishment.

First Mowing, Minimum Mowing Height and Mowing Frequency: The turf is ready for the first mowing approximately 3 weeks after seeding or when most of the grass has filled in. To avoid scalping the turf, do not remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade per mowing. Minimum recommended mowing height (reel mowers) is .5 to .75 inches (12.5 to 18.75 mm). After the first mowing, mow every 3 to 7 days. Rotary mowers require higher minimum height (around 1") to prevent scalping. Frequent mowing reduces the "brown look" on Bermuda.

Winter Over-seeding: Winter over-seeding of dormant Bermuda grass may be done for year round green color. It is not generally recommended on immature turf (less than 6 to 8 months of age). The safest practice would be to wait until second year (fall / winter) after your Bermuda is established. Late season plantings and newly established Bermuda grass may also be damaged by the vertical cutting and scalping procedures, leaving it unable to compete with the over-seeded species during the spring transition. Ryegrasses are the primary over-seeding species.