Nonseeded grasses

The term 'nonseeded grasses', refers to the type of grass plants which are propagated vegetatively. Most grasses in this category are warm-season grasses which grow in the warm temperate to tropical climates.

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Nonseeded grasses can be established by sodding, plugging or sprigging. Sodding is the most common for establishing an 'instant' new lawn. Plugging is less expensive than sodding, and some homeowners prefer this method of establishing entire lawns or renovating certain sections of the lawn. However, with plugging, weed control is needed until the lawn becomes established. Sprigging is often used to establish a large area, like an athletic field, using Bermudagrass. Watering is critical during the early stages of establishment to prevent desiccation of the sprigs (portions of plant stems, stolons). Again, weed invasion is possible with sprigging until the grass establishes a thick, dense surface.

Five of the most common non-seeded grasses are: St. Augustinegrass, bahiagrass, Bermudagrass, zoysia-grass and centipedegrass. The following is a brief description of their culture, use, pests and cultivars.

Hybrid bermudagrass, shown, and common types have a wide variety of uses: lawns, cemeteries, parks, institutional grounds, airfields, athletic fields, fairways, greens, tees, roughs and rights-of-way.

ST. AUGUSTINEGRASS
(Stenotaphrum secundatum) is native to the West Indies, but has been widely distributed to Mexico, Africa, Australia and the southern and southeastern US. It is an aggressive, stoloniferous, coarse-textured grass. It grows in a variety of soil types; however, it performs best in sandy loam, well-drained, fertile soils with pH 6.5. St. Augustinegrass has good salt tolerance, fair shade tolerance and poor traffic tolerance.

Culture: Mowing height should be between 3 and 4 inches. Mowing at shorter heights stresses the turf and predisposes it to drought and insect problems. Annual fertilization should be 3-6 lb N/1,000 sq ft/yr. In alkaline soils, St. Augustinegrass may suffer from iron deficiency. The yellowing can be corrected with foliar application of chelated iron. Water during dry spells is important to prevent stand dieback. Apply between .75 to 1 inch of water per week. Thatch can be a problem in St. Augustinegrass lawns. Verticutting (dethatching) will be required if thatch exceeds a depth of 1-inch in order to maintain the health of the turf. Propagation is through vegetative parts such as sprigs, plugs or sod.

Use: this grass is the major type of lawn turf in areas of the cont. on page 41
southeast, especially Florida. Other uses include commercial and industrial parks and street medians. Due to its poor wear tolerance, St. Augustinegrass is not used in play or park grounds. 

**Insects:** The most destructive insects are the inch bugs, especially in Florida. Other insects include white grubs and sod webworms. St. Augustinegrass is susceptible to such diseases as gray leaf spot and rust.

**Cultivars:** Common, Floratam, Bitter Blue, Seville (dwarf), FX-10 and Palmetto.

### BAHIAGRASS
*(Paspalum notatum)* is native to subtropical, eastern South America. It is a coarse-textured grass with tufted appearance due to its short and stout rhizomes and stolons. Bahiagrass is grown in Florida for low maintenance purposes. It can grow in a wide variety of soil types, but does best in droughty, coarse-textured, infertile soils with a pH of 6.5-7.5.

Watering is critical in the early stages of establishment to prevent desiccation of the sprigs, which are portions of plant stems.

**Culture:** Bahiagrass requires a medium to high level of cultural intensity. Mowing height should be between 1.5 to 2.5 inches. Mowing should be conducted regularly in the growing season to eliminate the long, profuse seed heads. Sharp mower blades must be used to provide a smooth cut of the tough, fibrous leaf blades. Annual fertilization may be as low as 1-4 lb N/1,000 sq ft/yr. Watering is not necessary as Bahiagrass has excellent drought tolerance. Thatching is seldom a problem. Propagation is primarily by sod. Bahiagrass seed is available and germination will be enhanced through scarification.

**Use:** Bahiagrass can be found in home lawns and is also used in roadside rights-of-way, airports and other low maintenance sites.
St. Augustinegrass thrives best in sandy loam, well-drained, fertile soils with a pH of 6.5.

**ZOYSIAGRASS**

(Zoysia spp.) is native to tropical eastern Asia, but has been introduced to the warm, humid and transitional climates of the world. It is a medium-to fine-textured grass with a creeping growth habit from both rhizomes and stolons forming a thick dense cover. Zoysiagrass can grow in a wide variety of soil types, but is intolerant of poorly drained soils. It performs best in well-drained, relatively fine-textured, fertile soils with a pH of 6 to 7. It has good salt, shade and traffic tolerance in the growing season.

**Culture:** Zoysiagrass requires a medium level of cultural intensity. Mowing should be conducted with a reel mower, and the recommended cutting height is 0.5 to 1 inch. The fertilization requirements can be as high as 3 to 6 lb N/1,000 sq ft/yr. Zoysiagrass needs irrigation during periods of drought. If grown under high maintenance conditions, verticutting (dethatching) will be necessary to remove thatch and improve air, water and nutrient penetration to the roots. All improved hybrids are propagated vegetatively by sprigs, plugs or sod. Seeds may be available for one species, *Z. japonica*, however, they must be hulled in order to improve the extremely poor germination.

**Use:** The most common use is for lawns. If the slow growth rate can be tolerated, then other uses may include parks, airfields, athletic fields, fairways, tees and playgrounds.

**Pests:** This grass is relatively pest free. Occasional problems with spittlebugs or ground pearls can be encountered. Diseases (brown patch and dollar spot) can cause serious damage, as well as root feeding activity by nematodes.

**Cultivars:** Common and Oaklawn. **LM**

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