

ASK THE EXPERT

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Warm-season fertilization

Problem: Would you please provide some information concerning the fertility requirement (amount of nitrogen) of common turfgrass in Texas? We are familiar with the turfgrass in the North, but know very little about the southern turfgrasses. (Texas)

Solution: The fertilization recommendations should be based on soil test results, turfgrass species, environmental conditions and other cultural practices such as mowing. Some soils may contain adequate amounts of phosphorus and/or potassium to maintain turfgrass. However, if they are determined to be deficient through soil testing, then the addition of these elements would help improve turfgrass. According to a report from Texas A&M University, the fertility of different turfgrass would vary depending on the species as follows:

RECOMMENDED N FERTILITY RATES	
Total Nitrogen Required (lbs/1,000 sq. ft./yr)	Grass Variety
5 - 7	hybrid bermudagrass (Tifway, Tifgreen, Tifdwarf)
4 - 6	common bermudagrass, perennial ryegrass
3 - 5	zoysiagrass
2 - 5	St. Augustinegrass, tall fescue
1 - 2	centipedegrass
1	buffalograss, carpetgrass

Source: The authors

Also, certain environmental factors such as shade, soil type, rainfall, mowing and clipping recycling can influence the amount of fertilizer needed by different species. Study the cultural and environmental factors on site which would further influence the fertility requirement.

Planting bed techniques

Problem: When installing a planting bed where the road is part of the edge of the planting bed, how can mulch be contained?

This area is usually too hard for edging, timbers are even dig-

ging a furrow, and sometimes extends several feet into the lawn, or planting, area. Without any border, mulch washout is a potential problem, resulting in a sloppy unprofessional job and a maintenance problem for the homeowner. I've considered moving the planting bed back to good soil and planting stone between the planting bed and road, or installing a raised bed and bordering with stone or brick. Each solution presents other challenges, "cost" being first. (Virginia)

Solution: The problem of maintaining a planting bed in between a road and lawn is difficult but not impossible. As you mentioned, moving the planting bed back to good soil and placing stone between the bed and road, or installing a raised bed and bordering with stone or brick would be an excellent solution. As you are aware, this would be a costly affair. Without these changes, the problems you have to address are: mulch being washed off, possible vehicle trafficking and subsequent compaction and disturbing the landscaping areas; and possible de-icing salt contamination.

For possible erosion and/or mulch being washed off, consider digging a bed edging trench next to the road:

Also use railway ties, treated lumber or landscape edging around the border of planting area facing the road. Because of possible contact by vehicles, metal edging would be more desirable than plastic. Depending upon the landscape and planting beds, some of groundcovers such as ivy, pachysandra or vinca, or euonymus can also be used along the border of planting, closer to the road area. If maintained properly, these border plantings should protect the mulch and also can enhance the landscape beauty.

To minimize or prevent vehicle trafficking and compaction of the planting borders, consider using some sort of wood or metal posts (at three- to four-foot intervals or whatever the lawn will dictate) around the planting area. If this is done properly, it should not affect the aesthetic value of the landscape.

To deal with the possibility of a de-icing salt problem, consider installing some sort of solid fence or burlap-type of barrier to protect the planting area. Also, deep watering in early spring to leach the excess salt from the rootzone will help minimize salt injury.

Since these plantings will be continually exposed to various climatic and mechanical stresses, provide proper watering, fertilizing, mulching and pest management as needed to improve plant health.

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Questions should be mailed to ASK THE EXPERT, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT, 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44130. Please allow 2 to 3 months for an answer to appear in the magazine.