

LOUISIANA HOME LAWN SERIES

A guide to maintaining a healthy Louisiana lawn



Sprig Establishment

Sprig Basics

Sprigging involves planting vegetative pieces, such as stolons (aboveground stems) and rhizomes (underground stems), of a desired grass into the soil. These vegetative pieces will root and grow together to establish a lawn. In Louisiana the only warm-season turfgrass species recommended for sprigging is bermudagrass. Sprigs should be planted before July in the early growing season. Depending on soil moisture, temperature and management, establishment generally takes 45 to 90 days.

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Turfgrass dormant		Turfgrass active growth season								Turfgrass dormant	

Site Preparation

STEP 1: Evaluate the soil characteristics, drainage pattern and any other existing conditions (e.g., shade) that will affect turfgrass establishment and growth. This evaluation will help you determine the proper turfgrass species for the site and identify other issues that may need to be corrected before establishment.

STEP 2: Collect a soil sample and submit for fertility analysis several weeks prior to beginning establishment. For larger areas or an area with differing soil types, more than one soil sample may be necessary. For information on how to collect a soil sample, see publication 3624-PPP.

STEP 3: Destroy any existing vegetation. Destroying vegetation can be accomplished through mechanical methods, solarization or nonselective herbicide application. The method chosen will determine the duration needed before implementing Step 4.

STEP 4: Once the existing vegetation is destroyed, till the soil to a depth of 4 to 6 inches and remove dead vegetation and debris. Tilling aerates the soil and can allow slight contouring of the area for better surface drainage. If adjustments in soil pH or fertility are recommended based on soil test results, then incorporate the required amendments or fertilizer.

STEP 5: Rake the area to remove any remaining debris and shape the area to allow for drainage. In-ground drainage and/or an irrigation system can be installed at this time.

STEP 6: Establish the final grade and lightly compact the soil surface with a roller so that it will hold the desired contour.

STEP 7: Select the proper turfgrass species. The only warm-season turfgrass species recommended for establishing a home lawn through sprigging is bermudagrass. If you would like to know more about bermudagrass please see the following publication 3624-OO.



Site prepared for sprigs

Considerations for Purchasing Sprigs

It is advisable to purchase sprigs that have been grown under similar climatic and soil conditions as the site intended for establishment. Sprigs can be purchased from commercial sod producers and are typically sold by the bushel. The recommended rate for sprigging bermudagrass in Louisiana is at least 400 bushels per acre. Increasing the sprigging rate can accelerate establishment of the lawn.

Other than purchasing sprigs from a commercial sod producer, a homeowner may choose to harvest sprigs from purchased sod. Use a hand tiller to shred sod slabs multiple times until vegetative pieces are suitable for sprigging.

Planting Sprigs

In Louisiana, bermudagrass sprigs should be planted as early as possible during the growing season (before July) so they have time to establish prior to the start of cool temperatures.

Sprigs should be planted as soon as possible after purchasing or delivery. Delaying the establishment process will result in poor establishment or greater incidence of sprig desiccation.

Plant sprigs uniformly across the lawn area. Be sure sprigs are even in thickness. It is best if sprigs are planted slightly into the soil. This will ensure even coverage and reduce weed encroachment as the turfgrass establishes in.

Following planting, lightly roll the area to ensure sprigs have good contact with the soil. It may also be beneficial to lightly topdress the establishment area with about a 1-inch layer of substrate, such as sand or a topsoil mix.

Immediately following planting, irrigate so that the sprigs and soil are moist. Do not irrigate to the point of surface runoff. Sprigs are extremely susceptible to desiccation; therefore, irrigation is critical during the grow-in period and may require multiple irrigation applications the first 10 to 14 days after planting.



Initial planting



30 days after sprig planting



60 days after sprig planting

Post Sprig Installation Care

Irrigation: Irrigation frequency will depend on environmental conditions and time of year. Sprigs need to be irrigated three to five times per day for the first 10 to 14 days. Irrigate so that the sprigs and surrounding soil are both moist. After 14 days irrigation should be applied less frequently with longer duration between irrigations to encourage deeper rooting by the turfgrass. Be sure not to irrigate to a point of surface runoff.

Nitrogen Fertilization: Fertilize with up to 0.5 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet (ft²) when the turfgrass has rooted into the soil. Roots may appear within 30 to 60 days, depending on environmental conditions. Subsequent nitrogen fertilization may be necessary. The nitrogen rate recommended for bermudagrass is up to 3 pounds per 1,000 square feet per year. Never apply more than 1 pound of nitrogen per application. Follow soil test recommendations for proper fertility if fertilizers were not incorporated during tilling in the preparation process.

Mowing and Traffic: During the establishment period it is best to limit traffic across the area to prevent turfgrass stress and surface disruption. Mowing should be initiated once the turfgrass begins to actively grow and the turfgrass is rooted into the soil. Roots may appear within 30 to 60 days, depending on environmental conditions. Make sure the soil is not saturated so that a mower does not rut or compact the soil. It is recommended that bermudagrass be mowed at 1 to 2 inches. Never remove more than one-third of the leaf blade at one mowing. Mowing at the appropriate height is key to having a healthy turfgrass, prevent scalping and reducing weed encroachment.

Turfgrass	Mowing Height	Nitrogen Rate (per 1000 ft ² per year)
Bermudagrass	1 - 2 inches	Up to 3 pounds
Centipedegrass	1 - 2.5 inches	Up to 2 pounds
St. Augustinegrass	2.5 - 3 inches	Up to 3 pounds
Zoysiagrass	1 - 2.5 inches	Up to 2 pounds

Authors:

Jeffrey Beasley, Associate Professor, School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences; Kayla Sanders, Extension Associate, School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences; Heather Kirk-Ballard, Assistant Professor of Consumer Horticulture, School of Plant Environmental and Soil Sciences

Visit our website: www.LSUAgCenter.com

Pub. 3624-VVV (Online Only) 10/19

William B. Richardson, LSU Vice President for Agriculture
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, LSU College of Agriculture
The LSU AgCenter and LSU provide equal opportunities in programs and employment.