



## Turf Grasses

### Bermuda

**Common Characteristics include:**

Tolerates pet and people traffic very well. All varieties have poor shade tolerance where it will become thin. They do best in sunny locations—full or nearly-full sunlight. Goes dormant during our droughts, but comes back with rainfall. Bermuda also goes dormant after the first hard freeze in late Fall. Requires about 1-inch of water per week to stay green (the same as St. Augustine and Zoysia), and almost **no** water if dormant. Mow to height of 1-1/2 inches. Looks best when it is mowed with a reel-type mower. The more you mow, the better it looks.

**Baby Bermuda**

Dwarf variety of Bermuda which is darker green in color. Pretty much disease-resistant. Needs to be sodded and grows to be about 4-inches tall.

**Common Bermuda**

Medium textured with a creeping growth habit. It spreads by stolons (surface runners) or rhizomes (below the surface). Spreads rapidly in late Spring and Summer. Sod or seed for propagation. Sow seed May through September. Seeds will not germinate until warm weather conditions arrive in early May. Pretty much disease-resistant, but **can** get Leaf Spot, Grubs, mild Rust.

**Sahara**

Improved strain of Common Bermuda. Opportunistic, it can be seeded or sodded. Pretty much disease-resistant; most common diseases are occasional Dollar Spot and possibly Pythium Blight.

**419 (Tifway)**

Has a less coarse, slightly wider blade. It is well-suited for lawns and athletic fields. Opportunistic. Needs to be sodded.

### Buffalo Grass

**Common Characteristics include:**

A native grass that handles our heat and drought conditions well. Good for sunny locations, does not grow well in shade. Does **not** tolerate pet and people traffic. Spreads by surface runners (stolons). Propagates by sod or plugs. Sod is thin so weeds can easily invade, but it does spread quickly. Forms a fine-textured, relatively thin turf with a soft, blue-green color. Looks best at height of 4 to 5 inches. Not very hardy in the San Antonio area, and has not performed as well as originally hoped as a turf for lawns. Can be overcome quickly by Bermuda even with minimal watering.

**609 Buffalo**

Best adapted to areas that receive low rainfall (15 to 30 inches per year), infrequent irrigation. Requires about 2 inches of water per month and almost **no** water if dormant. Goes dormant early. Likes heavy soil.

**Stampede Buffalo**

Similar in appearance to Bermuda, but softer, bluer, more delicate and less dense. Well-suited to low maintenance environments such as parks and roadsides. Is quick to go dormant in summer heat if not watered. Likes heavy soil and tolerates poor soils.

## Turf Grasses

### St. Augustine

#### **Common Characteristics, include:**

Relatively inexpensive and grows quickly. Needs to be sodded or plugged. Tolerates shade, but grows best in sun. A heavy water-user, it needs 1-inch per week, but will survive in a dormant state with ½ inch for 3 weeks. St. Augustine dies if not watered during a drought. Water every 2 weeks there is no rain, even in winter. Mow at 3 inches, increasing to 4 inches during the summer.

#### **Del Mar**

Does **not** tolerate pet or people traffic well. Susceptible to diseases, including Brown Patch, White grub damage, Chinch bugs.

#### **Floritam**

Coarse texture; stolons are large, purplish-red in color. Blades are wider and stronger. Not as shade tolerant as Raleigh. Stays green longer in the Fall, and goes dormant after several hard frosts. More disease-resistant, especially against St. Augustine Decline, Brown Patch and Chinch bugs.

#### **Raleigh**

Is the most cold-tolerant of all of the St. Augustines, but does **not** tolerate pet or people traffic. Do not water at night, because night watering can lead to Brown Patch. Susceptible to usual St. Augustine diseases, **except** St. Augustine Decline. Common diseases include Brown Patch, Gray Leaf Spot, mild Rust, Chinch bugs.

### Zoysia Grass

#### **Common Characteristics include:**

Tolerates pet and people traffic **fairly** well. Grows in shaded areas, but requires heavy maintenance. Does best in sunlight. Needs to be sodded. Plugging takes about 2 years to fill in and can allow for invasion of weeds and Bermuda. Mow at height of 2 inches. Goes dormant during drought, but comes back with rainfall. In the fall, Zoysia grass goes dormant earlier than St. Augustine. Few diseases, except for Rust in the Fall. In the Fall, goes dormant earlier than St. Augustine. Relatively expensive.

#### **El Toro**

Grows fast, but heals slowly after damage. Requires almost **no** water during dormancy. Looks best mowed with reel-type mower, but can use rotary motor if mowed weekly.

#### **Emerald**

Older variety of Zoysia with a nice, tight sod. Highly weed-resistant once established. Dark green with a medium texture a lot like steel wool. Not a fast grower, and heals slowly after damage. Spreads by stolons (surface runners) and rhizomes (below the surface). Good cold tolerance. Looks best with reel-type mower. Does **not** do well with rotary mower. Used for lawns and golf courses. Most expensive.

#### **Jamur**

Similar in appearance to El Toro, it does **not** grow fast and heals slowly after damage. Looks best when mowed with reel-type mower, but can use a rotary mower if mowed weekly. Requires 1 inch of water per week to maintain green color during the summer and requires almost **no** water during dormancy.

---

All GVST Gardening Guides are available on the GVST website: [www.gardeningvolunteers.org](http://www.gardeningvolunteers.org).

