

Centipedegrass

Lawn Maintenance Calendar

These suggested management practices will help you care for your lawn throughout the year. Location, terrain, soil type and condition, age of the lawn, previous lawn care, and other factors affect turf performance, so adjust these practices to suit your lawn.

March through May

Mowing Mow grass to 1 inch. Do not let grass get taller than 1½ inches. NEVER burn off centipedegrass to remove excessive debris.

Fertilization DO NOT apply nitrogen at this time. Yellow appearance may indicate an iron deficiency. Spray iron (ferrous) sulfate (2 ounces in water per 1,000 square feet) or a chelated iron source as needed. Follow label directions. Grass will green up within 24 hours.

Watering Actively growing centipedegrass needs 1 inch of water each week. If rainfall is insufficient, you will need to water. Sandy soils often require ½ inch of water every third day if rainfall is insufficient. Proper watering helps prevent or reduce problems later in the summer.

Weed Control When dogwoods are in full bloom, apply preemergence herbicides to control crabgrass, goosegrass, and foxtail. Apply postemergence herbicides in May if you need to control summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds like knotweed, spurge, and lespedeza. Do not apply postemergence herbicides until 3 weeks after greenup. Centipedegrass is sensitive to certain herbicides (for example, 2,4-D), so follow label directions and use with caution.

Insect Control Check for and control any white grubs. (See *White Grub Control in Turf*, AG-366).

Thatch Removal Power rake (vertical mow) to remove thatch (the layer of undecomposed grass) in late May if it is thicker than ½ inch. A 2- or 3-

inch blade spacing set ¼-inch deep in one direction works best. A power rake with a 1-inch blade spacing may severely damage the lawn.

Renovation Replant bare areas in May using seed (¼ to ½ pound per 1,000 square feet) or sprigs (¾ bushel per 1,000 square feet). It's easier to spread seed if you mix it with 2 gallons of fine sand per 1,000 square feet to be covered. Seeds germinate in 28 days, but establishment is slow. To keep seedbed continually moist, lightly water several times a day for 28 days. It takes up to 3 years to establish a new lawn. (See *Carolina Lawns*, AG-69.)

June through August

Mowing Follow March through May guidelines.

Fertilization Fertilize with ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in mid-June using a high potassium fertilizer like 5-5-15 or 8-8-24. (The third number gives potassium content.) At the coast, a second fertilization in August may help. Use a fertilizer without phosphorus (like 15-0-14, 8-0-24) if soil testing reveals that you already have moderate-to-high levels of phosphorus. Yellow appearance may indicate an iron deficiency. Follow March through May guidelines.

You need to apply ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, but how much fertilizer do you need to buy? Divide 50 by the FIRST number on the fertilizer bag. For example, if you've got a 5-5-15 fertilizer, you divide 50 by 5 and you get 10. That means you need to buy 10 pounds of fertilizer for every 1,000 square feet of lawn.

Watering Your lawn needs 1 inch of water every week. If you don't get enough rain, you will need to water. Sandy soils often require ½ inch of water every third day.

Weed Control Apply postemergence herbicides as needed to control summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds like knotweed, spurge, and lespedeza. Centipedegrass is sensitive to certain

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herbicides (like 2,4-D, MSMA), so be careful and follow label directions. Do not apply herbicides unless grass and weeds are actively growing and lawn is not suffering from drought stress.

Insect Control Check for and control any white grubs. (See *White Grub Control in Turf*, AG-366.) If you suspect nematode damage, contact your county Extension Center about soil testing.

September through November

Mowing Continue mowing your lawn to 1 inch before it gets taller than 1½ inches. Raise the mowing height to 1½ inches several weeks before the first expected hard frost, normally late September in the piedmont.

Fertilization Fertilize with 1 pound of potassium (K₂O) per 1,000 square feet 4 to 6 weeks before the first expected frost using 1.6 pounds of muriate of potash (0-0-60) or 2 pounds of potassium sulfate (0-0-50). DO NOT lime unless a soil test recommends lime.

You need to apply 1 pound of potash per 1,000 square feet, but how much fertilizer do you need to buy? Divide 100 by the THIRD number on the fertilizer bag. For example, if you've got a 6-6-12 fertilizer, divide 100 by 12 and you get 8.3. That means you need to buy 8.3 pounds of fertilizer for every 1,000 square feet of lawn.

Insect Control Follow March through May guidelines.

Watering Follow March through May guidelines until the lawn browns (becomes dormant). Then water to keep soil from becoming powder dry.

December through February

Mowing Remove lawn debris (rocks, sticks, and leaves). NEVER burn off centipede grass to remove excessive debris.

Fertilization DO NOT fertilize centipede grass at this time. Submit a soil sample for analysis every 3 years to determine nutrient requirements. Contact your county Extension Center for details. Apply lime or sulfur ONLY if the soil test recommends it.

Watering Water occasionally during dry spells.

Weed Control Apply broadleaf herbicides as necessary to control chickweed and henbit. Centipede grass is sensitive to certain herbicides (like 2,4-D), so be careful and follow label directions exactly. Selected herbicides (like atrazine or simazine) can be applied in November or December to control annual bluegrass and several winter annual broadleaf weeds.

More About Centipede Grass

Centipede grass is a slow-growing, apple-green, coarse-leaved turfgrass. It is a low-maintenance, general-purpose turf. It requires only ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year, doesn't need to be mowed frequently, and grows well in full sun to moderate shade. It does not tolerate traffic, compaction, high-phosphorus soils, low-potassium soils, high pH, excessive thatch, drought, or heavy shade.

Centipede grass is susceptible to nematodes, ground pearls (an insect), and fairy ring (a disease). Nematode damage appears as weak areas invaded by weeds. If you suspect nematodes talk to your Cooperative Extension agent about submitting a soil sample for analysis. (See *Problems on Centipede Grass*, Plant Pathology Information Note 241.) Ground pearl damage appears as circular dead areas with only weeds growing in the center. (See *Ground Pearls*, NCSU Department of Entomology Insect Note 64.) Fairy rings appear as circular green or dead areas that continue to enlarge for several years. (See *Diseases of Warm-Season Grasses*, AG-360.) Some broadleaf weed control herbicides and mismanagement can cause similar symptoms, so talk with your Cooperative Extension agent.

Proper lawn management practices help you prevent and control centipede grass problems. If centipede grass continues to die in a certain location, you may need to choose another species.

Some maintenance programs provided by professional lawn care service companies differ from recommendations given here and are equally effective.

Prepared by

Arthur H. Bruneau, Crop Science Extension Specialist, Turfgrass, with contributions and assistance from the following:

Matthew C. Martin, Area Specialized Agent, Turfgrass
Henry C. Wetzell, Extension Plant Pathology Specialist, Turfgrass
Rick L. Brandenburg, Extension Entomologist
Fred H. Yelverton, Extension Crop Science Specialist, Weed Management
Cale A. Bigelow, Extension Associate, Turfgrass

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