

For Every Grass There Is A Season

Warm season grass, cool season grass, isn't it all just grass? Which type is best for my lawn? Here in northeastern Oklahoma the answer is both. Warm season grasses can take our high summer temperatures and often-limited rainfall better than cool season grasses. Cool season grasses are more shade tolerant and will stay green from October through April when warm season grasses are dormant.

The first step for any successful lawn is healthy soil. We have complete soil test instructions including videos on our website, <https://www.tulsamastergardeners.org>. Choose the Lawn and Garden Help tab then the Soil tab. Scroll down to learn more.



Warm Season Grasses

Bermuda is the most common warm-season grass in our area. It is a sun loving, very heat and drought tolerant grass. For best results, apply seed from the last week of April through the second week of June. Bermuda sod is also a good choice to establish a new lawn or renovate an existing one. If needed, fertilize from April to August. Do not fertilize after September 1 to ensure winter hardiness. Early morning is clearly the best time to water.

Buffalo grass is a warm-season native prairie grass. It tolerates heat, drought and cold very well. Seed before July 1 or sod May through July to ensure winter hardiness. Buffalo grass does not require as much water or fertilizer as Bermuda grass. If needed, fertilize in June or July. It will grow in un-irrigated lawns and heavy textured soils.

Zoysia grass is more shade tolerant than Bermuda. It has good winter hardiness but takes longer to establish. Zoysia needs less fertilizer but does require more water to prevent wilting. If needed, fertilize in March or April. Do not fertilize after September. It does not produce seed so you will need to use sod or plugs to establish a lawn.

St Augustinegrass requires full sun to part shade but is not as winter hardy as Bermuda. It requires more water and does not tolerate poor soils. Fertilize after green-up and again eight to ten weeks later. St Augustinegrass can sometimes be grown in far southern Oklahoma in sheltered areas but will not survive our winter temperatures in Northern Oklahoma.



Cool Season Grasses

Tall turf type fescue is the most popular cool season grass in our area. It tolerates some shade better than Bermuda and will be green when the warm season grasses are dormant for the winter. The best time to seed is the last two weeks of September through the first two weeks of October. The second best time to seed begins the third week of February through the first week of April. If needed, fertilize in late February/early March, late April/very early May, late September to late November. Again, early morning is the best time to water.

Kentucky bluegrass is similar to fescue in its requirements and growing habits. Fertilize late summer to early fall and again at green-up. Bluegrass seed is often mixed with fescue. The grasses look alike and it has a better long-term survival rate than fescue so you may not need to re-seed as often.

Perennial or annual ryegrass can be over seeded into dormant warm season grasses or for soil stabilization during the fall and winter when warm season grasses are dormant. Fertilize late summer to early fall and again at green-up.

White clover can be planted in mid-September through October or mid-February through early April just as you would fescue. It will form patches through branching stems that grow along the soil surface and the roots at nodes. White clover is a legume, a plant that converts nitrogen from the air to useable nitrogen in the soil. By adding nitrogen to the soil instead of taking it out it improves your soil without adding chemicals. The globe shaped white “flowers” you see are actually clusters of small blooms producing seeds so you do not need to re-seed every spring and fall as you do with fescue.

You can get answers to all your gardening questions by visiting our website, www.tulsamastergardeners.org, by calling the Tulsa Master Gardeners Help Line at 918-746-3701 or by emailing us at mg@tulsamastergardeners.org, or come see us at our Diagnostic Center at 4116 E 15th St., Tulsa, OK.

Sources:

[OSU Cool Season Grasses Lawn Maintenance Calendar](#)

[OSU Bermudagrass Lawn Maintenance Calendar](#)

[OSU Extension Service HLA-6420 Lawn Management In Oklahoma](#)

[OSU Extension Service HLA-6418 Selecting a Lawn Grass for Oklahoma](#)

[OSU Extension Service HLA-6419 Establishing a Lawn in Oklahoma](#)

[OSU Extension Service HLA-6608 Managing Turf Grass in the Shade in Oklahoma](#)