

The Year of Buffalograss

In recent years, buffalograss has become more prevalent in Kansas lawns as a notoriously low-maintenance grass. Water and fertilizer requirements are extremely low, especially compared with other turf grasses. Although competition with weeds, especially in eastern Kansas, can be a barrier to a lush buffalograss lawn, proper management can alleviate many weed issues. If buffalograss lawns pique your interest, use the following calendar as a guide for care and management.

March

If broadleaf weeds are making an appearance already, use a spot treatment for control. The crucial timing for treatment of broadleaf weeds should be in late October to early November—well after the buffalograss is dormant. Treatments are much more effective in fall as the weeds are smaller and the weeds are sending energy, as well as the herbicide, to the roots.

Treatments in March are for survivors only. Spray early enough in March that the buffalograss is still dormant. To check for dormancy, look at the base of the plant for green shoots. Green means the grass has already begun to break dormancy and you should avoid spraying. Treatment should be on a day that is 50 degrees F or warmer. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours of application will reduce effectiveness, so make sure to check the forecast. A combination product such as Trimec, Weed-B-Gon or Weed-Out are most effective. Weed Free Zone is also good and will give quicker results under cool conditions.

April

Crabgrass preventer should be applied between the 1st and 15th of the month. Another indication of timing is when the eastern redbud is in full bloom. A product with prodiamine (Barricade) must be applied two weeks earlier.

Crabgrass preventers *must* be watered in for activation.

Now that the buffalograss is greening, broadleaf herbicides should not be used. Although an application wouldn't kill the grass, it will stunt its growth, making your lawn *more* susceptible to weeds.

June

June is time to fertilize! One pound of nitrogen per one-thousand square feet will suffice for buffalograss. As with all chemical applications—more is not better. Additional nitrogen will give your buffalograss a deeper green, but will also encourage weeds.

If grubs make an annual appearance in your lawn, now until mid-July is the time to control. Apply a product containing imidacloprid as these products kill the grubs before they damage your lawn. Application can be as early as mid-May for either billbugs or May beetle grubs. As with earlier crabgrass preventers, watering in this chemical is key to activation.

If you don't normally have grub damage, do not treat for grubs. If you've seen grub damage, treatment should focus on certain areas, rather than spraying the entire lawn. Beetles are more likely to lay eggs (that become grubs) around lights or in moist soil. If you've had grubs, treat these areas first and gauge how effective control is.

Late-July through August

Keep an eye out for grub damage during this time. If an application was made in June, this should not be necessary. You can fertilize again in July, although weeds should be considered before doing so.

Late October to Early November

Now that fall has arrived, broadleaf weed spray can be used, if broadleaf's are a problem in your lawn. You should carefully examine your lawn as chickweed and henbit, winter annuals, are small and can be easily overlooked. If spray is needed, use a product that contains 2,4-D as it increases effectiveness on dandelions. As with spring applications, treat on a day that is at least 50 degrees F. Again watch for rain as rain or irrigation within 24 hours reduces effectiveness.

Along with properly timed chemical control, regular mowing reduces broadleaf weeds in buffalograss, as broadleaf weeds cannot survive consistent mowing. If annual grasses (crabgrass or foxtail) are an issue, they can be prevented with prodiamine, pendimethalin or dithiopyr. With all chemical control, labels should be followed exactly.

More information on buffalograss can be found at:
<https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf658.pdf>