

# Bermudagrass

## The prevalent turf for Oklahoma lawns

Bermudagrass, or *Cynodon dactylon* as my college professor would call it, is the most common turf type in Oklahoma lawns. Bermudagrass is a sun-loving grass, drought tolerant, wear tolerant, and fairly easy to grow. It's usually established by sodding, laying rolls of existing turf on bare soil, to establish a lawn quickly. Certain varieties can also be established by seed, such as common bermudagrass. However, these varieties are not as good for home lawns compared to the newer hybrid turf varieties which are sodded. One can also save some money by plugging or sprigging bermudagrass roots and stolons into the soil, watering well, and with patience, the turf will spread out and develop into a thick turf with time.

Bermuda grass originally came from Africa, where it had frequent disturbances such as grazing, flooding, and fire. It can be found growing in pastures and understories of open woodlands and orchards. It is called bermudagrass in the U.S. because it was introduced from the Bermuda Island many years ago. Today, it is a favorite pasture grass for cattle, used in home lawns and parks, golf courses, and on sports fields.



Bermudagrass is a creeping warm-season grass. As it grows along the ground, a root forms along each node forming another root, and eventually forming a dense turf. With deep roots up to several feet possible, bermudagrass has good drought tolerance. The spreading nature of it also provides good wear tolerance.

During a drought, and during the cold of winter, bermudagrass leaves will turn brown and go into a dormant state. The crown and root system are still alive, but the top part of the plant stops growing and turns brown. This is the natural way that the grass survives either cold conditions or drought conditions. In Oklahoma, bermudagrass typically will begin to slow growth and go dormant in late October to November, and then green-up again in late April, depending upon the weather.

Bermudagrass will grow and perform well in Oklahoma especially with the following:

- Good full sun area, receiving at least 8 hours of full sunlight each day.
- Hot temperatures. Bermudagrass does not like cool weather.
- Good soil fertility. Bermudagrass loves nitrogen, about 4-5 lbs/1000' per season.
- Good watering. While it will survive without water in a drought, it will not be green.
- Good mowing. As with any turf, it needs to be mowed properly—about 1.5"-2.5" high.

Bermudagrass will develop a thick turf if maintained properly, and help to choke out many invasive weeds. Proper weed-control will help cut down on weeds competing with the turf also. One common problem in home lawns is the thinning of bermudagrass turf as small trees become larger trees, shading portions of the lawn. At this point, seeding fescue into these shaded areas is needed, which can tolerate some shade compared to sun-loving bermudagrass.