

# Establishing and Caring for a St. Augustine Grass Lawn

## Site Requirements and Preparation-

St. Augustine grass is the only permanent lawngrass with good to excellent shade tolerance for the Deep South. However, it does need some sunlight to thrive; very dense shade as found under trees with a heavy canopy such as Southern Magnolia or Camphor is unsuitable for any lawngrass. Sites under Live Oaks, Pines and various hardwood trees often provide enough dappled sunlight for St. Augustine grass to grow well. If you are in doubt whether enough light is available, we recommend trialing a few pieces of sod or a tray of plugs for several months. Groundcovers such as Asiatic Jasmine, Liriope or Algerian Ivy tolerate very dense shade.

Before laying sod all debris should be removed taking care to get out all weeds, roots and sticks that may interfere with rooting. Compacted soil should be tilled to ensure good rooting.

## Watering-

Because sod is cut with few remaining roots, keeping it adequately watered is vital to establishing a new lawn. On days without rain newly laid sod should be watered enough to wet the soil several inches below the sod. New sod must be inspected daily to determine whether irrigation is needed. Ideally all sod should be irrigated in the morning to give the grass blades enough time to dry before evening. When lawns are watered in the afternoon or evening the risk of lawn disease is increased. When the sod starts getting anchored into the soil (test by pulling) it is important to reduce the frequency of irrigation. Established St. Augustine should be irrigated when the blades start to turn dull and curl slightly. Established St. Augustine lawns should be watered deeply-applying ½ to ¾ inch of water twice a week on weeks without rain once drought stress starts.

## Fertilizing-

Apply Ferti-lome New Lawn Starter to the ground at the rate of 20 pounds per 5,000 square feet before laying new sod, use a 4 pound container for 2 pallets. Established St. Augustine lawns can be fertilized in April and July with Esposito's 15-0-15 and with 5-0-20 (Winterizer) in September or October.

## Plugging-

Plugs provide an economical alternative to sodding. If plugs are staggered 18" apart one tray will cover 56 square feet of area. Because plugs come with more soil and deeper roots than sod, they will not need as much attention as sod demands. Use one teaspoon of Ferti-lome Start -N-Grow into each plug hole before planting the grass plugs. Plugs may be placed into existing lawns to convert them to St. Augustine grass.

## Mowing-

Most varieties of St. Augustine grass are best mowed at 2 to 4 inches high. Compact varieties such as 'Seville' and 'Amerishade' can be mowed at 1 ½ to 3 inches high. Watch your lawn for mowing need, during moist warm weather weekly mowing may be required, during dry or cooler weather mowing may be needed only every 10 days.

## Insect Control-

Tropical Sod Webworms and Chinch Bugs are the worst insect pests in St. Augustine lawns, both appear in the summer and fall months. Sod Webworms chew grass blades and cause broad areas of dying grass to appear. Chinch Bugs cause yellowing and dying grass in sunny drier areas of the lawn. Both of these pests are effectively controlled by spraying with Acephate 75. Put 4 ½ Tablespoons of Acephate into the Gilmour 6 gallon hose attachment sprayer and add water to the top. Shake contents to ensure dilution. This will cover 1,000 sq. feet.



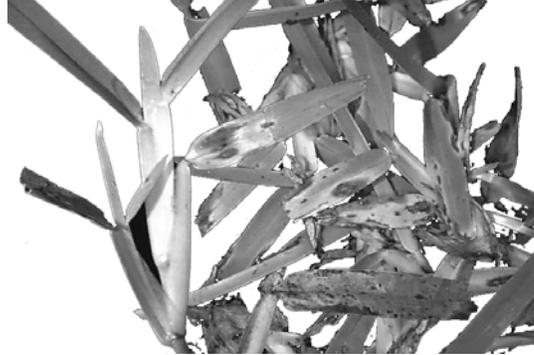
Above-Chinch Bugs  
Center-Tropical Sod Webworm  
Right- Webworm Moth



## **Disease Management of St. Augustine Grass-**

St. Augustine grass should be inspected weekly for signs of leaf spots and patches of dying grass. Care should be taken to avoid afternoon or evening irrigation because lawn diseases will spread when the blades are wet at night. Fungicides are an important tool in managing turf diseases, however it is important to understand that one spraying with a fungicide will not be sufficient to stop and prevent disease. Fungicides must be re-applied at a 7 to 10 day interval to prevent the spread of lawn diseases.

### **Gray Leaf of St. Augustinegrass-**



During wet weather Gray Leaf Spot is a common disease that can quickly appear. Gray Leaf Spot shows up as gray or brown lesions on the leaf blades and can kill entire leaves. Avoid fertilizing with soluble nitrogen during moist warm weather to help manage this disease. Catch and remove grass clipping where Gray Leaf Spot is a problem. Control this disease by spraying with Hi-Yield Daconil or Ferti-lome Broad Spectrum Liquid Fungicide. Due to thickness of this chemical, mix 8oz. of spray with 8oz. of water. Set Gilmour sprayer dial to 6TbIs per gallon. This will cover 250 square feet of lawn.

### **Brown Patch-**



Brown Patch kills broad areas of grass, often leaving a few live blades of grass scattered in the patch of dying or dead turf. Brown Patch symptoms on St. Augustine include yellowing blades that can be easily pulled up with rotting leaf sheaths. Brown Patch is best controlled with Ferti-lome Liquid Systemic Fungicide. Set the Gilmour Sprayer dial to 10, pour in 15 ounces and spray onto an area of 750 square feet.

### **Dollar Spot-**



Dollar Spot in St. Augustine lawns appears as small dead spots, often about hand sized. Dollar Spot produces large lesions on the grass blades. Dollar Spot is best controlled with Ferti-lome Liquid Systemic Fungicide. Set the Gilmour Sprayer dial to 6, pour in 15 ounces and spray onto an area of 1,250 square feet.