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Centipedegrass Maintenance Calendar

Centipedegrass is a slow-growing, apple-green, coarse-leaved turfgrass that is adapted for use as a low maintenance, general purpose turf. It requires little fertilizer (one to two pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year), infrequent mowing, and will tolerate moderate shade if it receives at least four hours of full sun, daily. It does not tolerate traffic, compaction, high phosphorus soils, high pH, low-potassium soils, excessive thatch, drought, or heavy shade. See HGIC 1209, *Centipedegrass* for additional information on care and varieties.

Centipedgrass Lawn.
Bert McCarty, ©2015, Clemson University

February Through May

Mowing: Mow lawn at one inch at the time of initial greenup. Mow before grass gets above 1½ inches tall. Do not burn off centipedegrass to remove excessive debris because of possible injury to the lawn and potential fire hazard. For more information on mowing, refer to HGIC 1205, *Mowing Lawns*.

Weed Control: To control crabgrass, goosegrass, and other annual weeds, apply preemergence herbicides when forsythia are in bloom. Approximate times are March 1 in the coastal and central areas and March 15 to 30 in the piedmont/mountain areas. Apply postemergence herbicides in May as needed for control of summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds, such as knotweed, spurge, and lespedeza. Do not apply until three weeks after greenup. Centipedegrass is sensitive to certain herbicides, such as 2,4-D. Follow label directions and use with caution.

Thatch Removal: Power rake (vertical mow) to remove thatch in late May if necessary. A 2- or 3-inch blade spacing set ¼ inch deep in one direction works best. Do not use a power rake with a 1 inch blade spacing as severe turf injury may result.

Insect Control: Inspect for white grubs by cutting three sides of a one foot square piece of sod and laying it back to reveal the root zone. Control if necessary.

Fertilization: As stated, centipede lawns should receive 1 to 2 pounds of nitrogen per year, per 1000 square feet. The higher rate may be chosen for those desiring optimum aesthetics. Also, it may be needed if the lawn is growing in sandy soil or in an area with a long growing season, such as near the coast. Applying more than 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square feet, per year can be harmful to the turf.

Apply ½ to 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in late April or early May after lawn fully greens up. A soil test will help determine if a 16-4-8 or a 15-0-15 fertilizer is best for your lawn. A

yellow appearance may indicate an iron deficiency due to soil temperatures lagging behind air temperatures. Spraying with iron (ferrous) sulfate (2 ounces in 3 to 5 gallons of water per 1,000 square feet) or a chelated iron source will help to enhance color. Lime may be added if a soil test indicates a need. To determine amount of product required to apply ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, divide 50 by the first number on the fertilizer bag. This will give you the number of pounds of product to apply. See HGIC 1201, *Fertilizing Lawns*, for more information.

Irrigation: Water to prevent drought stress. Centipedegrass grows best with about 1 inch of water per week. In the case of no rain, apply ½ inch every three to five days. Sandy soils often require more frequent watering; e.g., ½ inch every third day. Proper irrigation may prevent or reduce pest and non-pest problems later in the summer.

During dormancy, water to prevent excessive dehydration. This is especially important if warm, bright days precede days forecasted to be in the low 20's or lower. For more information, refer to HGIC 1207, *Watering Lawns*.

Renovation: Replant large bare areas in May using sod, seed (¼ to ½ pound per 1,000 square feet) or sprigs (5 bushels per 1,000 square feet). Mixing seed with 2 gallons of fine sand per 1,000 square feet will aid in distribution. Germination is expected in 28 days and establishment is slow. To ensure good germination, keep the seedbed moist with light, frequent sprinklings several times a day. It is not uncommon for it to take three years for a new lawn to become uniform and dense. For more information, refer to HGIC 1204, *Lawn Renovation*.

June Through August

Mowing: Mow lawn at 1½ inches. Mow before grass gets above 2 inches tall.

Fertilization: Always fertilize and lime based on a soil test. Established centipedegrass should not receive phosphorus fertilizer unless a soil test indicates that it is needed. Fertilize with ½ to 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet before August 15, using a high potassium fertilizer such as 15-0-15. A yellow appearance may indicate an iron deficiency due to excessive phosphorus and/or a high soil pH. A long term approach is needed to correct either cause, but iron can be added to quickly enhance color. Spray iron (ferrous) sulfate at the rate of 2 ounces in water per 1,000 square feet.

Insect Control: Check for white grubs, spittlebugs, mole crickets, and others. Control if necessary. See fact sheets: EIIS/TO-9 *Whitegrub Management in Turfgrass*, EIIS/TO-1, *Mole Cricket Management for the Home Lawn*, EIIS/TO-16 *Two-lined Spittlebug*.

Irrigation: Water to prevent drought stress. Centipedegrass grows best with about 1 inch of water per week. Sandy soils often require more frequent applications, such as ½ inch of water every third day.

Weed Control: Apply postemergence herbicides as needed for control of summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds such as knotweed and spurge. Use sethoxydim, (such as Arrest or Segment herbicides) to control grassy weeds such as crabgrass and goosegrass. Centipedegrass is sensitive to certain herbicides, such as 2,4-D, so follow label directions and use with caution. Do not apply herbicides unless grass and weeds are growing actively and are not suffering from drought stress.

September Through November

Mowing: Mow lawn at 1½ inches and before grass gets above 2 inches tall. Raise mowing height to 2 inches several weeks before expected frost.

Fertilization: Do not apply nitrogen at this time. Lime may be added if recommended by a soil test. Potash can be applied to enhance winter hardiness if a soil test indicates low levels of potassium. Apply 1 pound of potash (K2O) per 1,000 square feet, 4 to 6 weeks before expected frost, using 1.6 pounds of muriate of potash (0-0-60) or 2 pounds of potassium sulfate (0-0-50).

Irrigation: Continue to water to prevent drought stress. After lawn has become dormant, water as needed to prevent excessive dehydration. This is especially important if warm, bright days precede days forecasted to be in the low 20's or lower.

Insect Control: Check for white grubs and control as necessary.

December Through February

Fertilization: Do not apply fertilizer at this time. Submit soil samples every three years to determine what nutrients, other than nitrogen, are needed. Apply lime or sulfur as suggested by a soil test to raise or lower soil pH respectively.

Weed Control: Apply broadleaf herbicides as necessary for control of chickweed, henbit, and others. Centipedegrass is sensitive to certain herbicides, such as 2,4-D, so follow label directions for reducing rates and use with caution. Selected herbicides (e.g., atrazine) can be applied in November or December for control of annual bluegrass and several winter annual broadleaf weeds.

Pesticides updated by Joey Williams, HGIC Horticulture Extension Agent, Clemson University, 7/16. Originally prepared by Tim Davis, Extension Agent, Clemson University, and Chuck Burgess, Extension Agent. New 04/04. Images added 3/15.