

Turfgrass Establishment When to Plant Turfgrasses

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Some turfgrasses grow best during warm weather, while others become heat-stressed. Some are established from seed; others produce

no viable seed. Sterile, hybrid turfgrasses are often established from sod, plugs or harvested segments of stolons or rhizomes referred to as sprigs. Site preparation, timing and the care provided after planting usually determine if turfgrasses survive.

Bluegrasses (*Poa* spp.), fescues (*Festuca* spp.) and ryegrasses (*Lolium* spp.) grow best from 60 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit. In Tennessee, late August to mid-October is considered an ideal time to seed these cool-season turfgrasses. Although late summer and early fall plantings are preferred, and wet, rainy weather may make soil preparation difficult, fescues and ryegrasses are sometimes seeded in late winter or early spring. Kentucky



bluegrass should not be seeded in spring. Kentucky bluegrass seeds germinate very slowly compared to fescues and ryegrasses, and poorly developed seedlings are usually killed by hot, dry weather in summer. Tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass sod is most often installed from January through June and September through December. Many sod producers do not like to market sod of cool-season turfgrasses in July and August, when plants are prone to high-temperature stress and disease.

Temperatures from 80 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit favor the growth of bermudagrass (*Cynodon* spp.), centipedegrass [*Eremochloa ophiuroides* (Munroe.) Hack.], St. Augustinegrass [*Stenotaphrum secundatum* (Walt.) Kuntze.] and *Zoysia* (*Zoysia* spp.). In Tennessee, seeds, plugs or sprigs of these warm-season turfgrasses should be planted between May 1 and June 30. Sod of warm-season turfgrasses is installed throughout the year, as long as the planting bed is not frozen. However, if turfgrasses are dormant at planting, several weeks or months may be required before the newly sodded turf can withstand traffic.



Common planting methods and timing for establishing several turfgrass species in Tennessee.

Species	Planting Method	Timing
Cool-season		
Bluegrass, hybrid <i>Poa pratensis</i> L. x <i>Poa arachifera</i> Torr.	sod, ^a seed	late summer – early fall
Bluegrass, Kentucky <i>Poa pratensis</i> L.	seed	late summer – early fall
Bluegrass, rough <i>Poa trivialis</i> L.	seed	late summer – early fall
Fescue, chewings <i>Festuca rubra</i> L. ssp. <i>falax</i> Thuill., <i>Festuca rubra</i> var. <i>commutata</i> Gaud.	seed	late summer – early fall, late winter – early spring
Fescue, hard <i>Festuca longifolia</i> auct. non Thuill.	seed	late summer – early fall, late winter – early spring
Fescue, sheep <i>Festuca ovina</i> L.	seed	late summer – early fall, late winter – early spring
Fescue, slender creeping red <i>Festuca rubra</i> L. ssp. <i>trichophylla</i> , <i>Festuca rubra</i> var. <i>littoralis</i> Vasey	seed	late summer – early fall, late winter – early spring
Fescue, strong creeping red <i>Festuca rubra</i> L. <i>rubra</i>	seed	late summer – early fall, late winter – early spring
Fescue, tall <i>Festuca arundinacea</i> Schreb.	sod, ^a seed	late summer – early fall, late winter – early spring
Ryegrass, annual (Italian) <i>Lolium multiflorum</i> Lam.	seed	late summer – early fall, late winter – early spring
Ryegrass, intermediate <i>Lolium hybridum</i> , hybrid of <i>Lolium multiflorum</i> Lam. + <i>Lolium perenne</i> L.	seed	late summer – early fall, late winter – early spring
Ryegrass, perennial (English) <i>Lolium perenne</i> L.	seed	late summer – early fall, late winter – early spring

Warm-season		
Bermudagrass <i>Cynodon</i> spp.		
Common or Improved Common Bermudagrass <i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers.	sod, ^b plugs, sprigs, seed	late spring – early summer
Hybrid Bermudagrass <i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers. x <i>Cynodon transvaalensis</i> Davy.	sod, ^b plugs, sprigs	late spring – early summer
Centipedegrass <i>Eremochloa ophiuroides</i> (Munro.) Hack.	sod, ^b plugs, sprigs, seed	late spring – early summer
St. Augustinegrass <i>Stenotaphrum secundatum</i> (Walt.) Kuntze.	sod, ^b plugs, sprigs	late spring – early summer
<i>Zoysia</i> <i>Zoysia</i> spp.		
Chinese, Japanese or Korean Common Lawngrass <i>Zoysia japonica</i> Steud.	sod, ^b plugs, sprigs, seed	late spring – early summer
Manilagrass <i>Zoysia matrella</i> (L.) Merr.	sod, ^b plugs, sprigs	late spring – early summer
Mascarenegrass, Korean velvetgrass <i>Zoysia tenuifolia</i> Thiele, ^c <i>Zoysia pacifica</i> (Goudsward) Hotta & Kuroki	sod, ^b plugs, sprigs	late spring – early summer
Hybrid <i>Zoysia japonica</i> Steud. x <i>Zoysia tenuifolia</i> Thiele, <i>Zoysia japonica</i> Steud. x [<i>Zoysia matrella</i> (L.) Merr. x <i>Zoysia tenuifolia</i> Thiele]	sod, ^b plugs, sprigs	late spring – early summer

^a To avoid transplanting turfs during high-temperature stress, sod of cool-season turfgrasses is usually installed from January through June and September through December.

^b Sod of warm-season turfgrasses can be installed all year long as long as the planting bed is not frozen.

^c The species *Zoysia tenuifolia* appears to have been misidentified and is now identified as *Zoysia pacifica*.

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