

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



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Zoysia — Love It or Leave It!

Zoysia is one of those grasses *you either love or hate; there is very little in between*. Zoysia has been available for many years on Long Island, but contrary to popular belief, it is not a miracle grass nor a living substitute for Astro Turf. It's a warm weather grass originally grown in the south until northern strains were developed some years ago.

A zoysia lawn has many advantages. Once established, it produces a thick, dense, cushiony turf that helps prevent weeds and other undesirable grasses from invading the lawn area. Because of its southern nature, Zoysia can withstand higher temperatures than most northern grasses and has better color and density, can be mowed closer and live on poorer soils. Because of its heat tolerance, zoysia can tolerate greater stresses from wear and tear during the summer months. Once established, it needs less fertilizer and water than most cool-season turfgrasses.

On the other hand, zoysia loses its nice green color in the fall and stays straw colored all winter until mid-May when it greens up again. For the most part, it is usually not seeded, it is sprigged; one plants zoysia plugs on 8 inches to 1 foot centers over the whole area that is to become the lawn. These areas are slow to become established and weeds can be a problem during this period. A much faster method of establishment is by using zoysia sod. Zoysia sod is available on Long Island but on a limited basis. Check Yellow Pages under "Sod."

Zoysia is not recommended for shaded areas. Since it has a very vigorous growth habit, it needs more regular mowing during the summer months than the cool-season grasses. Many have been misinformed about the insect and disease tolerances of zoysia. Contrary to common belief, it can be severely damaged by chinch bugs, sod webworm and grubs. Zoysia can be infected with rust. Aside from the aesthetics of the straw-brown color in winter, this dormant mat of grass is flammable and can be a fire hazard during periods of drought. Persistent traffic during winter dormancy can cause injury to zoysia grass, as can damage from severely cold winters.

You better really love zoysia before you decide you want it for a lawn

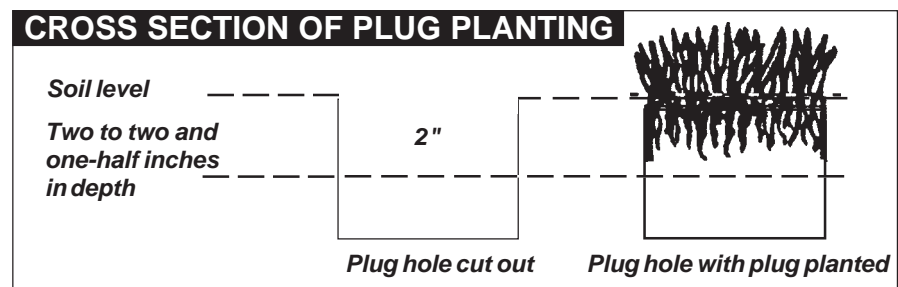
because it's difficult and expensive to remove. It can invade flower beds and other cultivated areas. For many, zoysia has been an answer to their prayers, while for others it has been a penance. Only you can decide if it will fit your needs.

Planting

A well prepared, weed free level planting bed is desirable when establishing zoysia. Vegetative plantings may be made by plugging, sprigging or sodding. A plug is a round or square piece of zoysia sod, usually 2" to 4" in diameter with a core 2" to 2 1/2" deep. A sprig applies to a vegetative portion of the grass plant that usually includes grass blades, runners and some roots. Attempts to seed zoysia are usually not successful.

Plugging

Plugs may be put in later than sprigs. They should be planted in the spring although they can be planted in the fall. Little growth will be made until the following spring. Plant plugs on soil that has been prepared and is weed free. Plant on 8"-12" centers, or closer if desired. Plugs can be purchased in some garden centers or can be taken from an existing lawn with a plug cutter. Make holes in the lawn where the plugs are to be planted. Fill the holes with water, plant the plug and step on it to make sure the soil is firm around the roots. The planted plug should be level with the soil, as shown in the diagram.



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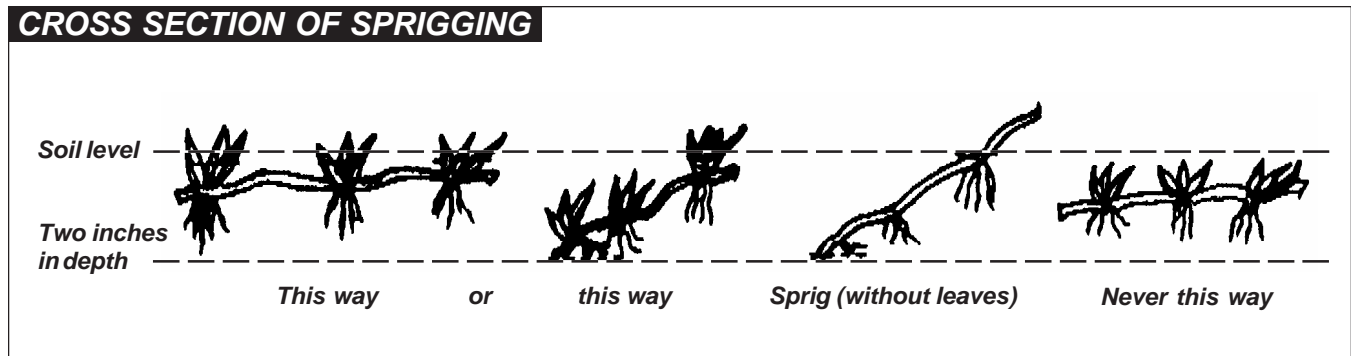
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Sprigging

Sprigs can be planted anytime after the last frost in the spring until mid-August. Sprigs are obtained by tearing apart or shredding solid pieces of established zoysia sod. The pieces should be at least 3" long. With a hoe or spade, dig a shallow trench 2" deep in the prepared soil. Plant sprigs so one end of each sprig is at least 2" below the surface of the ground. Make sure some part of each sprig is above the soil or the sprig will die (see diagram). If the sprigs are fresh and planted 4"-6" apart in rows 1' apart, a solid zoysia lawn should result in 1-2 years. The closer the sprigs, the faster the lawn will establish. Be sure to water, fertilize and periodically weed to hasten growth.



Liming

Soil acidity for zoysia should be maintained in the 6.5-7.0 range. A soil test preferably taken in the fall, can determine the soil pH and indicate the proper amount of lime needed to bring the pH to the optimum level.

Fertilization

To establish, apply one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. To determine how much one pound of actual nitrogen is, simply divide the first number (on the fertilizer bag) into 100. If you are using a 10-6-4 fertilizer, take the first number (which is always nitrogen) and in this case is 10, and divide it into 100 (100/10). The answer is 10. Therefore, you will apply 10 pounds of your 10-6-4 fertilizer (out of the bag) per 1,000 square feet. If you were using a 26-3-10, then you would spread 4 pounds (out of the bag) over 1,000 square feet. This should be worked into the top 6" to 8" of soil along with lime and organic matter. Apply a half pound of actual nitrogen one to two weeks after planting. Apply another 1/2 pound in early July.

After establishment

Fertilize zoysia lawns in late May and again in mid-July with one pound of actual nitrogen per application. Established zoysia requires less fertilizer than most turfgrasses and can endure periods without fertilization.

Mowing

Zoysia can be mowed fairly short at about 1 1/4". It can be mowed close because of its low prostrate growth habit. Be sure to keep your mower blades sharp. The tough grass blades of zoysia can dull mower blades quicker than other grasses.

Varieties

Meyer Zoysia is the most readily available and winter hardy variety for this area. It has a fine texture and good green color.

Weed control

There are several preemergence crabgrass control materials that homeowners can use. These will control many summer annual weeds.

A dense lawn is the best defense against weeds. Non-selective herbicides can be used as a **spot** treatment. Remember, these herbicides will kill grass, even zoysia. If you choose to use chemical weed control, contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations.