

PLANT HEALTH CARE REPORT



St. Augustinegrass

St. Augustinegrass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*) is a coarse-textured, warm-season grass that forms a lush, dark green turf. It is well adapted to southern coastal regions where it thrives on sandy soils and in a warm, humid climate. St. Augustinegrass spreads by stolons, horizontal aboveground stems that produce buds and roots.

A healthy lawn requires a comprehensive maintenance program that includes regular mowing, irrigation, fertilization, and disease and pest management. Weather and environmental factors can create unexpected problems even with the best of care. Routine monitoring is critical. St. Augustinegrass tolerances for factors are rated below:

1. **Shade:** Good
2. **Heat:** Very good
3. **Cold:** Poor
4. **Drought:** Good
5. **Wear:** Poor

Regular mowing at the proper height is important for optimum turf vigor. St. Augustinegrass has a moderate growth rate and performs best at a mowing height of 3 to 4", depending on cultivar. A mowing height below 3" can damage the stolons, causing the turf to thin and increasing its



Augustinegrass 'Floritam' should be maintained at a 3½–4" mowing height
Photo courtesy of L. Trenholm, UF/IFAS



susceptibility to diseases, insect pests, and weeds. Semi-dwarf cultivars can be mowed between 2 and 3”.

Although St. Augustinegrass exhibits good drought tolerance, 1” of water per week is needed for a healthy lawn. When grown on well-drained, sandy soils, St. Augustinegrass may require ½” of water every 3 days to prevent onset of drought symptoms. Irrigation should be monitored and adjusted on a weekly basis according to rainfall to ensure that the correct amount of water is applied. Supplemental irrigation is usually not needed until the turf begins to show drought symptoms such as wilted leaves or footprints that remain after walking. Turf in full sun may require more frequent irrigation.

St. Augustinegrass should be fertilized and the soil pH adjusted based on a soil analysis. St. Augustinegrass requires approximately 2½ pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year to maintain optimum health. Fertilizer applications should begin in May after the grass turns green and continue through August at a rate of ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, except in July when nitrogen should be applied at a rate of 1 pound per 1,000 square feet. Do not apply nitrogen after late August. Maintain soil pH between 5.5 and 6.5 with applications of lime (raises pH) or sulfur (lowers pH).

Diseases that may affect St. Augustinegrass are gray leaf spot, large patch, and take-all root rot. Insect pests that may affect St. Augustinegrass include chinch bug, mole cricket, and grubs. Monitor turf weekly for onset of disease and insect symptoms. Excessive irrigation and poor soil drainage will increase the potential for disease. Treat disease

Monitoring and Treatment Considerations for St. Augustinegrass

Late winter

Apply 1st treatment of pre-emergent herbicide. Sample soil for nutrient and pH levels. Apply post-emergent herbicide for winter weeds on dormant lawns.

Early spring

Dethatch and aerate lawn if needed.

Late spring–early summer

Make 1st application of fertilizer after grass greens. Irrigate if needed. Begin mowing before lawn reaches 4”.

Mid–late summer

Make 2nd (1 lb rate in July only) and 3rd applications of fertilizer 6 weeks apart. Monitor for chinch bug, mole cricket, grubs; treat as needed. Apply spot treatment herbicide directly to weeds. Irrigate if needed.

Early–mid-fall

If diseases were damaging last season, apply preventive fungicide. Apply 2nd treatment of pre-emergent herbicide for winter weeds. Apply non-nitrogen fertilizer and adjust pH according to soil analysis. Stop mowing when grass is dormant.

preventively and apply insect management programs when the pest is first detected.

Effective weed control can be achieved with a combination of pre- and post-emergent herbicides. Apply pre-emergent herbicides in late September and late February to prevent broadleaf and grassy weeds (e.g. annual bluegrass). Spot treatments with a post-emergent herbicide can suppress weeds during the growing season, but are most effective on winter weeds when the turf is dormant.