

P.O. Box 7220, Tempe, Arizona 85281
Web site address: www.fourpeakslandscape.com
E-mail address: info@fourpeakslandscape.com
Phone number: (480) 967-0376

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Rye Grass Out, Bermuda Grass In!

You may be admiring that beautiful stand of Rye grass which looks great but it's time to make it go away. If you continue to try and baby the Rye grass along (which can hold on until July with enough water) it will just lead to a poor Bermuda grass stand and when it finally does brown out in mid summer there will not be any Bermuda grass to take its place. Bermuda grass needs about 100 days of active growing to maintain a healthy stand. This means that the Bermuda needs to be growing in full force by early June, especially if you plan on planting Rye grass again in the Fall. To properly transition to Bermuda there are a few steps that should be followed. In late April to early May, when soil temperatures reach 65 degrees or higher, dormant Bermuda begins to emerge. Because of the competition between the 2 grasses (Bermuda & rye), care should be taken to enhance the Bermuda while antagonizing the Rye. Keep in mind, the time to change from rye to Bermuda is April through May. This can be done by completing the following:

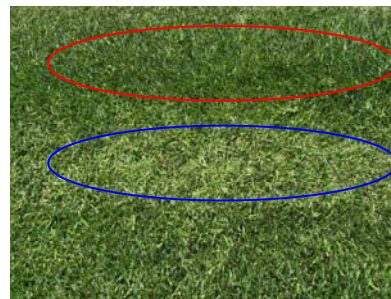
1. Lower the Mowing Height

Remove leaf area from the rye, this causes the Rye to use up food reserves in the roots. This activity is termed "Burning Out". The lower mowing height also opens up the turf canopy for direct heat absorption by the soil, which encourages Bermuda grass growth.

2. Fertilize

Light fertilizer applications every 2 weeks using

water soluble nitrogen fertilizer is recommended. This might increase growth of the Rye, so an additional mowing in the middle of the week may be necessary. This fertilizer application will help weaken the Rye grass in conjunction with the lower mowing height in addition to reviving the dormant Bermuda grass.



Remaining Rye Grass

Bermuda Grass Filling In

3. Water to the Needs of the Bermuda Grass

It is recommended that you reduce or maintain the amount of irrigation to stress the rye grass. As the temperatures begin to increase in May the Rye grass will require additional water. Only apply enough water for the Bermuda which will help the Bermuda grass out-compete the Rye. Look for a grayish blue coloration of the rye for visible signs of Rye stress. Remember, you want to decrease the irrigation just enough to stress the rye but still allow the Bermuda to grow. **Do not shut off the irrigation altogether** as this will cause damage to both grasses.

Following these steps for 4 to 5 weeks should provide the needed results to have a healthy Bermuda turf stand for the summer.

PREPARE FOR LANDSCAPE SUCCESS

By Jim Trog, CIA, CIC



Summer is just around the corner! Taking time to prepare now will make all the difference in the appearance of your landscape. There are a few irrigation related chores that you will want to complete to ensure that your landscape has a healthy summer.

If you haven't already done so, now is the time to give your irrigation system a thorough check up. Look for signs of leaks that may be wasting water. These may appear as green circles in your lawn around your sprinkler heads or an area that just never seems to dry out. The most common cause of this type of leak is a worn diaphragm inside the electric irrigation valve or debris in the valve that won't allow the diaphragm to close properly. Either can be easily fixed by removing the screws on the top of the valve to remove the bonnet. (Remember to turn your water off before working on the valves.) This will reveal the only two parts inside which are a spring and a diaphragm. Check the diaphragm for any signs of cracking or wear. Replace if needed. Be sure to clean or flush any visible debris out of the valve before reassembling.



Turn your valves on one by one and check the performance of each zone. Sprinkler nozzles that may have become clogged will prevent even distribution of water across your lawn. These nozzles may be cleaned or replaced. Also check

that the sprinklers pop up and spray above the top of the lawn. Sprinklers that are too low may be raised by adding a threaded extension to the base of the sprinkler body but make sure that the sprinkler remains at the soil grade so that it does not get hit by the mower. 3" extensions are the most common to purchase, but may be cut to the desired length. If the sprinkler is already at the soil grade then a longer popup sprinkler can be installed.

Be sure to check the irrigation to your plants and trees at this time too. As plants mature, the single drip emitter that was installed at the base of the plant may not be delivering enough water to meet the needs of your mature landscape.



Now would also be a good time to get those emitters moved out to the canopy line of your younger trees. Don't discount the value of taking the time to do this work. Locating the emitters

PREPARE FOR LANDSCAPE SUCCESS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

near the drip line of the tree encourages root development in that direction, which in turn may reduce monsoon or storm losses of trees and improves the health and sustainability of your trees long term. Adjust your irrigation controller. Early morning waterings when there is little wind, temperatures are lowest and humidity is highest results in the least water loss due to evaporation. It also allows time for the plant material to soak up the water and nutrients which it will use during the day to generate energy for the landscape to grow. Understanding how to adjust the run time and the frequency of irrigation based on current weather conditions is the most important factor in delivering the proper amount of water to your plant material. Seasonal adjustments are essential for good water management and plant health. A good guide to calculating the best run time for your lawn can be found at <http://ag.arizona.edu/azmet/phx/>



If you have slopes pay attention to runoff from the sprinklers. Set sprinkler run times to the point where runoff begins. If additional water is required then add start times and adjust accordingly.



MONTHLY LANDSCAPE CHECKLIST

– Plant Renovation List (Common Type Plants)

- √ Pink or Red Fairy Dusters
- √ Natal Plum
- √ Cassia (if they were not completed in April)
- √ Penstemon
- √ Brittlebush

– General Irrigation Setting (Actual times will vary depending on the precipitation rate of your system)

- √ Rye or Bermuda Grass Turf irrigated using typical pop-up sprinklers: 6 – 9 minutes twice per week. Remember that you should begin transitioning

the Rye grass to Bermuda, do not increase the amount of water if you see the Rye begin to stress and die off. Pay attention to the Bermuda.

- √ Drip irrigation for Plants: 15 – 20 minutes two times per week.
- √ Drip irrigation for Trees: 20 – 25 minutes two times per week.

Please remember that these are general recommendations and depending on your system you may need to adjust watering times up or down. Also, if we do receive rain then irrigation can be suspended until the soil dries.