



# Homeowners Guide to Centipedegrass Management in Florida

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Centipedegrass (*Eremochloa ophiuroides* [Munro] Hack.) is a low-maintenance warm-season grass that is slow-growing and has low fertility requirements. It grows close to the ground, is medium textured, and is a lighter green color than other lawn grasses. Mismanagement can reduce its cold tolerance and increase pest problems causing long-term maintenance issues. For more information on centipedegrass cultivars, refer to ENH8, *Centipedegrass for Florida Lawns* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH009>).



- » For more information, refer to ENH02, *Preparing to Plant a Florida Lawn* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh012>), and ENH3, *Establishing Your Florida Lawn* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh013>).

## Nutrition

Fertilizer applications should be made following the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Best Management Practices (BMP), Florida Urban Turf Fertilization Rule (5E-1.003 F.A.C.), and state and local regulations.

- Annual nitrogen fertilization recommendations for different geographic regions in Florida can found in Table 1.
- Depending on geographic location, annual fertilization recommendations should be split into 1-3 applications and applied when the turfgrass is actively growing.
- Do not overfertilize centipedegrass with nitrogen to turn it darker green as it will cause pest problems and thatch accumulation.
- Phosphorus levels are best determined by soil testing, and it is often not necessary to add phosphorus fertilizer to a lawn after establishment in Florida.
- In general, the first fertilizer application should be early to mid-April in central and north Florida, respectively.
  - » Do not fertilize too early in the growing season or too late in the year.
- South Florida, applications may be made throughout the year due to year-round growth.
- Foliar applications of iron may be needed if deficiency detected.
- Homeowners are encouraged to initiate a program based on the guidelines in Table 1, and then adjust this over time based on the turfgrass response.

## Establishment

- Centipedegrass can be established by seed or vegetatively (sod, plugs, or sprigs).
  - » Best time to seed is from April to July.
- It does very well in acidic soil (pH 4.5-6.5). If soil pH is high, it may not be the best choice.
  - » Preplant application of wettable sulfur may reduce the pH of the soil.
- Keep soil moist until the grass is well rooted, then watering should be reduced to an as-needed basis.
  - » 7-10 days after planting - multiple, short (5-10 minutes) irrigation events throughout the course of the day. For the next 7-10 days, irrigate once a day to apply ¼ inch of water. After this, irrigate every other day applying ¼-½ inch of water. Once fully established (approximately 30 days after planting), irrigation can begin on an as-needed basis.
- First mowing should occur once the grass is well rooted, generally 14-21 days after planting.

- For more information, refer to ENH1089, *Urban Turf Fertilizer Rule for Home Lawn Fertilization* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep353>), and ENH979, *Homeowner Best Management Practices for the Home Lawn* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep236>).

## Mowing

- No more than 1/3 of the leaf blades should be removed with any mowing.
- Grass clippings should be left on the lawn.
- 1.5-2.5 inch mowing height.
- For more information, refer to ENH10, *Mowing Your Florida Lawn* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh028>).

## Watering

- An established, mature grass should be irrigated on an as-needed basis.
- When moisture stress occurs (leaf blades begin to wilt or turn a blue-gray color), apply 1/2-3/4 inch of water per application.
- Centipedegrass has good drought tolerance and usually recovers from severe drought soon after rainfall or irrigation.
- Do not overwater as this weakens the turf and encourages weeds.
- Follow any local watering restrictions and adjust irrigation accordingly.
- For more information, refer to ENH9, *Watering Your Florida Lawn* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh025>).

## Pest Management

- Weeds can easily invade newly established and poorly maintained lawns, use herbicides labeled for centipedegrass.
  - » For more information, refer to ENH884, *Weed Management in Home Lawns* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep141>).
- A major insect pest is ground pearls, which do not have an effective control product. Other insect pests include lawn caterpillars, grubs, mole crickets, spittlebugs, and sod webworms.
  - » For more information, refer to ENY300, *Insect Pest Management on Turfgrass* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ig001>).

- The major disease problem is centipedegrass decline, which can be minimized by following proper cultural practices. Additional disease problems can occur from large patch and dollar spot.
  - » For more information, refer to ENH8, *Centipedegrass for Florida Lawns* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH009>), SS-PLP-14, *Turfgrass Disease Management* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh040>), PP-233, *Homeowner's Guide to Fungicides for Lawn and Landscape Disease Management* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pp154>), and [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic\\_turf\\_diseases](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_turf_diseases).
- Nematodes can be a serious pest causing symptoms of severe wilt, even when well-watered, and can cause the lawn to thin and eventually die.
  - » For more information, refer to ENY006, *Nematode Management in Residential Lawns* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ng039>).

Local UF/IFAS Extension offices can assist with pest identification and management recommendations. Additionally, a properly maintained lawn is the best approach to pest control.

## Reference and More Information on Centipedegrass Lawns

ENH8, *Centipedegrass for Florida Lawns* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH009>).

**Table 1.** Annual nitrogen fertilization recommendations for centipedegrass in three regions of Florida.

Location <sup>1</sup>	Nitrogen Fertility Recommendations <sup>2</sup> (lbs N/1000 sq ft/year)
North Florida	0.4-2
Central Florida	0.4-3
South Florida	0.4-3

<sup>1</sup>North Florida is considered north of Ocala, Central Florida is from Ocala to State Road 60, and South Florida is south of State Road 60.

<sup>2</sup>Homeowner preferences for lawn quality and maintenance level vary; therefore, a range of fertility rates are recommended. Additionally, effects within a localized region and microenvironmental influences (i.e., shade, drought, soil conditions, and irrigation) necessitate ranges of fertility rates. Recommendations also assume that grass clippings are recycled.