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).

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 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.

Mowing

- No more than ⅓ 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 ½-¾ 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.
- 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Nitrogen Fertility Recommendations&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; (lbs N/1000 sq ft/year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Florida</td>
<td>0.4-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Florida</td>
<td>0.4-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Florida</td>
<td>0.4-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1North Florida is considered north of Ocala, Central Florida is from Ocala to State Road 60, and South Florida is south of State Road 60.
2Homeowner 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.

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