



Homeowners Guide to Bahiagrass Management in Florida

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Bahiagrass (*Paspalum notatum* Flugge) is a low-maintenance warm-season grass that does well with limited water and fertilizer inputs. It forms an extensive, deep root system and it does not form excessive thatch. However, the varieties currently available do not produce a dense, carpet-like lawn like other Florida lawn grasses. For more information on bahiagrass varieties, refer to ENH6, *Bahiagrass for Florida Lawns* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH006>).



- Newly planted lawn should not be fertilized until 30-60 days after planting.
- 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 ENH6, *Bahiagrass for Florida Lawns* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH006>).

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.
- 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 apply nitrogen too early in the growing season, especially in north Florida, due to late-season frosts.
- South Florida, applications may be made throughout the year due to year-round growth.
- 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

- Bahiagrass is generally established from sod or seeds.
 - » It is a good practice to inspect sod for weeds before accepting it.
- It can be established any time of year in much of Florida.
 - » North Florida, the best time is during the spring and early summer months.
- 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 ¼-½ inch of water. After this, frequency should be reduced to 2-3 times weekly, again applying ¼-½ inch of water. Once fully established (generally, three to four weeks after sodding), irrigation can begin on an as-needed basis.

- 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.
- 3–4 inch mowing height.
- Mowing cycles are often dictated by seed head production.
- 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.
- Bahiagrass can survive through droughts, but it will turn brown as it enters dormancy (stops growing).
 - » Once rainfall or irrigation resumes, it will recover from severe drought.
- 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

- If weeds are a persistent problem, use herbicides labeled for Bahiagrass.
 - » For more information, refer to ENH884, *Weed Management in Home Lawns* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep141>).
- A major insect pest is the mole cricket, which burrow through the soil and damage roots, causing the grass to wilt easier.
 - » For more information, refer to ENH6, *Bahiagrass for Florida Lawns* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH006>).

- Few diseases cause serious problems in bahiagrass, but dollar spot may occur.
 - » For more information, refer to 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 generally are not as damaging to bahiagrass as other Florida lawn grasses because its deep, extensive root system. However, nematode damage could occur.
 - » 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. Bahiagrass is generally less troubled by pest than other Florida lawn grasses. Additionally, a healthy, vigorous lawn is the best approach to pest control.

Reference and More Information on Bahiagrass Lawns

ENH6, *Bahiagrass for Florida Lawns* (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH006>).

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

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

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.