Warm-season turfgrass does well in Oklahoma’s diverse climate

For many landscapes, the most prominent feature is the lawn. Because of our geographic location, Oklahoma permits turfgrass species popular in all parts of the country to be grown somewhere in the state.

Successful turfgrass management begins with the selection of a turfgrass species adapted to the wide fluctuations in temperature and moisture found in the state. It also involves choosing a turfgrass that suits the needs of the area in which it will be planted. Whether it’s for a show place, a sports field, your average lawn or a cover to protect soil from erosion, your choice of turfgrass is important. Whatever you choose, make sure it’s suited to any physical or environmental limitations of the planting site, including shade, no supplemental water or poor soil conditions.

Bermudagrass is an aggressive, warm-season turfgrass species that spreads rapidly by above-ground and below-ground stems. It is the best-adapted turfgrass for full-sun areas in Oklahoma because it has excellent heat and drought tolerance, as well as sufficient winter hardiness. Many cultivars are available for different situations.

Another great warm-season option is buffalograss. It’s a sod-forming, native prairie grass that spreads by stolons and has a fine texture and grayish-green color. It’s well-suited for Oklahoma’s heat, drought and cold conditions, and is best suited for full-sun sites in areas of the state that receive 12 to 25 inches of rainfall per year. Buffalograss grows best on heavy-textured soils and has some tolerance of alkaline soils. This is a good option for unirrigated lawns and general turf areas in western Oklahoma. It produces numerous seed heads which may distract from the general appearance of the turf.

Zoysiagrass is a fine- to medium-textured warm-season turfgrass that spreads by stolons and rhizomes. Two of its desirable features are its winter hardiness and its ability to grow under light shade. On the flip side, its greatest liability is its slow establishment rate. Zoysiagrass requires more frequent watering to prevent wilting than bermudagrass, but has lower annual fertilizer requirements. Zoysiagrass should only be utilized for lawns when a top-quality and high-maintenance turf is desired. Meyer zoysiagrass is the only cultivar commercially available in appreciable quantities in Oklahoma.

While suited for southern Texas, St. Augustinegrass can be grown in the far southcentral/southeastern regions of Oklahoma on sheltered sites (do not use north of the Ardmore-Sulfur-Ada-McAlester-Poteau area). It’s a medium to coarse-textured, warm-season turfgrass that spreads by stolons. St. Augustinegrass produces a quality lawn on full-sun to
lightly-shaded sites. However, it requires more frequent watering and better soil conditions than bermudagrass.

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