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 * Mimeograph March, 1947 *
 * Paper No. 48 Revised September, 1956 *
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 * GEORGIA COASTAL PLAIN EXPERIMENT STATION *
 * Tifton, Georgia *
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 * Information based on observations and experiments with lawn grasses. *
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CENTIPEDE GRASS FOR LAWNS

Centipede grass, introduced from China a number of years ago, is a good all-round lawn grass for the deep South. Like every other lawn grass, it has definite disadvantages which should be recognized. This paper has been prepared to help you decide whether or not it will meet your requirements.

CAUTION - DO NOT PLANT CENTIPEDE ON FARM LAWNS. It is only a matter of time until livestock will eat some of the seedheads and scatter the seeds in their droppings throughout the pasture. These seeds will produce plants which will rapidly crowd out the other grasses. When Centipede grass has replaced the other grasses, the pasture will be ruined. Cattle make little gain and often lose weight on pure Centipede grass. Nutritionally, it is about the poorest of all pasture grasses. For the above reason, we do not recommend planting Centipede grass to stabilize the soil on farm dams. Bermudagrass or carpet grass should be used for this purpose.

Desirable Features of Centipede Grass For Lawns

1. It makes a dense, weed-free sod.
2. It grows on poor soils
3. It requires very little fertilization.
4. It requires less mowing than carpet and Bermudagrass.
5. It tolerates more shade than Bermudagrass, but less than St. Augustine.
6. It is more resistant to fungus diseases and above ground insect attacks than most grasses.

Undesirable Features of Centipede Grass For Lawns

1. Like carpet and Bermudagrass, it turns brown with the first freeze and usually stays brown until spring.
2. It makes such a dense sod that it is rather difficult to start overseeded wintergrass (ryegrass).

Establishing A New Lawn

Level the lawn and establish all grades as desired. Apply complete fertilizer, something like a 4-8-8, at a rate of 10 to 15 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Harrow or rake the fertilizer in well.

Centipede grass may be established by planting seed or sprigs. Although it may be planted from February to August, early spring plantings are usually most successful.

Establishment from seed

1. Broadcast approximately 8 to 12 ounces of good seed uniformly over each 1,000 square feet of lawn. Mix the seed thoroughly with 1 gallon of dry sand or another carrier to facilitate uniform distribution.
2. Work the seed into the soil to a depth of 1/4 inch by raking lightly with a garden rake, etc.
3. Water thoroughly and keep the soil moist until seedlings are established. Centipede seedlings have little drought resistance and will die if not watered during dry periods.
4. Mow frequently to reduce weed competition and facilitate establishment. To control weeds and establish a pure stand of Centipede grass use temporary soil sterilants as Vapam (Stauffer Chemical Co.) or Mylome, Carbide and Carbon Chemical Co.). Do not use these materials close to trees or shrubs. Follow directions of the manufacturer.
5. A light top-dressing of nitrate of soda (6 lbs./1,000 square feet), Milorganite, (15 lbs./1,000 square feet), etc., about 5 to 6 weeks after planting will usually hasten coverage. Broadcast fertilizer like seed when grass is dry and wash in to prevent burning.

Establishment from sprigs

1. Plant fresh, live sprigs in moist soil 18 inches apart in 18-inch rows for coverage in 12 months. For more rapid coverage, space closer. Be sure to plant with the tip end of the sprigs uncovered or very near the surface of the soil.
2. Water thoroughly and often enough to keep soil moist. Sprigs become established faster than seedlings and usually require less watering after planting.
3. Hand weeding will hasten establishment but management as outline under 4 and 5 above will generally give good results.

Establishment On An Old Lawn

If the old lawn is level and properly graded, Centipede grass may be seeded or sprigged into the ground without plowing the soil. Plenty of water must be used under such circumstances, however, to keep the seedlings or sprigs from drying out and dying. Use very little fertilizer if there is Bermudagrass in the old lawn, because fertilizer favors the Bermuda at the expense of the centipede grass. For best results use temporary soil sterilants as discussed under 4 above.