



# **TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA**

**(ACT INCORPORATED)**

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**Association not registered for GST**

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## **Best practice for conversion to Warm Season Grasses in the ACT Region**

With the weather changes in Canberra and the region there are a lot of Turf managers looking at options to save water. An important long term option for saving water has to be the changing of turf species to those that use less water. \*

The movement from cool season grasses to warm season grasses can give water savings in the long term of up 50%.

### **Establishment of Warm Season Grasses – Checklist**

**The following should be considered to give the greatest chance of success.**

- 1 Establishment Time**
  - Soil temperature must be consistently above 18 degrees.
  - Establishment should start by mid November and be completed prior to the end of December.
- 2 Irrigation system**
  - Conduct an irrigation systems audit to ensure your system is working efficiently.
- 3 Soil Preparation**
  - Soil testing should be carried out to determine chemical properties and nutritional status.
- 4 Pre Establishment Fertilizing**
  - Follow any recommendations from the soil test before establishing grass.
- 5 Reduce competition**
  - Cut surface as low as possible and stop irrigating area to stress/remove cool season grass species.
  - Scarify area if necessary.
  - Use of growth retardant chemicals or herbicides to suppress/ kill cool season grasses.
- 6 Selection of grass species**
  - Select the best warm season species and cultivar for your area and use.
- 7 Seed to Soil Contact**
  - Soil contact for both seed and vegetative material will improve establishment The use of a sprigging machine or seeding machine will increase soil and seed/stolon contact. This can also be helped by scarifying surface, reducing thatch or topdressing surface before establishment. Seed can be coated with fungicide to help

control disease and will also stop birds from eating the seed. Pre-germination of seed will also assist in quicker establishment.

- 8 Materials to retain moisture at the surface
  - Straw mulch, growth cloth and wetting agents can help in reducing evaporation losses.
- 9 Post establishment fertilizing
  - Set up fertilizer program to encourage growth after germination of grass. Small amounts of fertilizer each 2 weeks. The use of liquid fertilizer can help due to the plant taking up the fertilizer through the leaf and roots. Increase use of nitrogen and phosphorus to encourage leaf and root growth.
- 10 Mowing Surface
  - The quicker you can cut surface to encourage lateral growth the better.
- 11 Establishment Period
  - Complete establishment of the warm season grasses in the ACT region may take up to 3 years. The weather conditions are the major factor in the growth of the grass. It is desirable to have air temperatures above 25 degrees during the first 6 weeks of growth.

### Watering schedule for establishing Warm Season Grasses

The top 10mm of surface has to be kept moist during establishment. All irrigation scheduling should be based on weather conditions especially evaporation. During initial establishment the complete replacement of net evaporation is required, tapering off to 45% of net evaporation as the turf becomes established.

#### Watering Guideline

	Establishment by Seed	Establishment by Vegetative material
<b>Week 1</b>	Irrigate 4/5 times during day	Irrigate 4/5 times during day
<b>Week 2</b>	Irrigate 4/5 times during day	Irrigate 4/5 times during day
<b>Week 3</b>	Irrigate 3/4 times during day	Irrigate 1/2 times during day and night
<b>Week4</b>	Irrigate 1/2 times during day and night	Irrigated every second day
<b>Week5</b>	Irrigate at night	Irrigate every 2/3 days Depending on weather conditions
<b>Week 6</b>	Irrigate every 2/3 days Depending on weather conditions	

\*Please note, exemptions may be available in times of water restrictions. Please contact ACTEW's Water Conservation Office on 02 6248 3131 for further information.