

BEING GREEN



SANGJIB MIN/NEWPORT NEWS DAILY PRESS/MCT
Tom Rogers, Williamsburg/JCC master gardener, checks out his Zoysia grass lawn in Williamsburg, Virginia, on Tuesday, July 20, 2010. Rogers had his fescue lawn removed so he could install and test Zoysia warm-season lawn a year ago. Rogers said the new lawn has better heat and drought tolerance than fescue lawn.

Zoysia 'Zeon' Grass Keeps Lawns Green

BY KATHY VAN MULLEKOM

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NEWPORT NEWS, Va. — Tom Rogers and his yard are the envy of the neighborhood this summer.

While surrounding cool-season fescue lawns bake in abnormally dry, hot weather, Tom's warm-season zoysia stays mostly lush and green.

"It's the most beautiful lawn I've ever had," says Tom, a master gardener who lives in Williamsburg, Va.

"The 100 plus days made it turn yellowish-brown in spots but it came right back with rain."

Tired of all the work it takes to keep a fescue lawn looking good, Tom jumped at the chance to turn his yard into a testing ground for Zeon, a relatively new, fine-blade zoysia. Zeon isn't grown from seed, so it must be planted from sod or sprig.

Whether you grow a warm- or cool-season lawn is basically a matter of preference and also where you live. Mike Goatley, turf expert at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., says he's seen zoysia growing as far north as Traverse City, Mich., surviving the winters there just fine.

Zoysia is a slow-growing grass, creeping above and below ground, but it's not a fast mover like Bermuda.

"You might cover a lawn during the summer growing season with 2-inch-diameter zoysia plugs on 4- to 6-inch centers, if you are persistent with enough irrigation and light fertilization to encourage growth," says Goatley.

For Rogers' installment, workers first used a sod cutter to remove the fescue. After putting down a layer of compost, they installed the sod, all on the same day. Rogers filled all seams with sand, so the zoysia would quickly grow together, which it did, he says. He watered daily for 10 days to help the sod root into existing soil. Earlier, he had taken a soil sample to determine

the pH and other nutrients needed. He applied an organic fertilizer in a 7-7-7 formula at the two-week mark and potash 0-0-6 at the rate of 5 pounds per 1,000 square feet several weeks later.

In October, he put down a bag of Supomag, a potassium and magnesium supplement in a 0-0-22 formula, to keep it green into fall.

In December, once the lawn was dormant and almost all brown, Goatley used back pack sprayers filled with water-soluble paint to color the lawn green.

"From the street, you could not tell it was painted and it stayed that way until it came out of dormancy in spring," says Rogers.

For homeowners who can't decide what seed or sod to use on their yard, Virginia Cooperative Extension annually publishes recommendations for turf grasses of all types. Among zoysias, Meyer is recommended for sod or sprig, while Zenith and Compadre are good seed forms. Zeon, along with DeAnza, El Toro, Emerald, Jamur, Miyako and Victoria, are listed as "promising" sod and sprig forms for eastern Virginia only.

"Tom has one of the prettiest grasses on the planet in a fine-textured, emerald green, but I think any of the varieties on our recommended list are viable candidates in Tidewater," says Goatley.

"Virginia Tech established Zeon from sod outside its new basketball practice facility last fall and it did just fine coming through our winter."

Although zoysia tolerates shade better than Bermuda, it won't thrive in heavily shaded, persistently wet conditions. Zoysia needs four to six hours of direct sun to maintain good density; it's pricier than Bermuda because it takes longer to get the product to market.

"A mature zoysia lawn in the right setting provides some of the highest-quality, lowest input turf possible," says Goatley.

When Life Gives You Weeds, Make A Salad

BY MARGARET LAUTERBACH

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August was known by early Anglo-Saxons as "weed month," for this is the month broadleaf weed growth accelerates, even on this continent. These weeds are emulating the grasses that took off so abundantly last winter.

But eating enemy weeds gives you a little extra vengeful satisfaction.

Dandelion greens are edible, but best-tasting if harvested before the plant blooms in early spring. Some seed companies sell seeds for dandelions. This is a food rich in Vitamins A, C, and K, and fair amounts of several necessary minerals. They are a little bitter, but good sauteed with garlic, and paired with chicken, for example.

Then there's purslane. Its juicy stems and succulent leaves are edible, but not choice in my opinion. Some companies, especially European seed companies, also sell seeds for purslane. This is a weed really dedicated to growing. Unless you turn it upside down, it's not dead even though the root is out of the ground.

Purslane is nutritionally rich, containing more omega-3 fatty acids than some fish oils, a very good source of Vitamins A, C, some B complex vitamins, and dietary minerals such as iron, calcium, potassium, and others. It's usually added to salads.

Lamb's quarters is edible too, but watch out for leaf miners making whitish tracks in leaves (there are or have been larvae consuming the leaf between the upper and lower layers of cells). This is another nutritious food for humans, but it also has a high sodium content.

You can even eat pigweed, also packed with vitamins, and, like these other weeds, good bulk providers. Miners' lettuce is usually almost too small to bother with, but this year it appeared at least four times the size it had been in previous years. It's green, crunchy, and very early appearing in the garden. Leaves are quite round, encircling the stems. I've been told Sonchus (sowthistle) is eaten by New Zealand natives (Maoris), and even sold at their farmers' markets. This weed is especially annoying because it has a brittle main stem that breaks off when you try to pull it. I can't imagine trying to eat it. But I sometimes do let it alone, when aphids congregate in force on the stems, preferring that weed to my delicious vegetables.

When aphids become so numerous on Sonchus I suspect some are going to fly to a new location. I cut off the stem at soil line and put it in the trash, aphids and all.

Some gardeners lay weeds, especially the tap-rooted ones, on the soil, so minerals they've collected from the depths will be dropped onto the soil's surface. Beware of their bolting to seed, even after being pulled.

HOME GARDEN

Fireworks Grass: A Blaze Of Color

BY NORMAN WINTER

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Fireworks fountain grass explodes with color and interest with its flaming variegated foliage and arching foxtail like plumes. The fact that it is happening now in tired summer gardens is even better.

Botanically speaking, Fireworks is Pennisetum setaceum, just like the purple fountain grass with which you may have some familiarity. What you will find different is foliage that is variegated with mid-veins of typical burgundy with glowing hot pink on the margins. You will even see some green closer to the base of the leaves. It is simply incredible.

You'll find descriptors all over the place describing its height and width but most mature plants I see approach 24 to 36 inches with an equal spread. Don't underestimate the power of its fine texture lending a real aesthetic look to your landscape.

Blooming grasses, Fireworks included, add a new dimension in the landscape. While vines add a vertical element, grasses do something few people think about — they move. A garden planted with several species of grasses close together performs a dance in the wind that no choreographer could duplicate. Back and forth they move as the wind dictates, slow and gentle, fast and swirling, mesmerizing everyone who is watching.

You'll find that both foliage and bloom are also incredible when placed in the landscape where they can be backlit from the setting sun or landscape lighting. They glisten like they have a small coat of ice, and speaking of ice, the first frosty kiss of a fall morning makes

the Fireworks and other grasses too, the prettiest plants in the landscape. If backlighting is not possible, keep in mind however that a backdrop of typical green foliage will make the Fireworks even more sensational in color.

Like the purple fountain grass, it will be cold hardy to zone 9 and higher meaning most of us will grow it as an annual. To grow yours select a site in full sun, although they will tolerate some afternoon shade. The bed should be fertile and well drained. Amend the soil if needed with 3 to 4 inches of organic matter and till to a depth of 8 to 10 inches. While preparing the soil, incorporate 2 pounds of a slow release 12-6-6-fertilizer per 100 square feet of bed space.

In the hot summer landscape your choices of partners are unlimited. Blue flowers provide a nice by gaudy contrast, and yellow flowers are awesome. One terrific planting I recently saw included the tough-as-nails Diamond Frost euphorbia with hundreds of tiny white flowers and an althernanthera with similar colored leaves. This time of the year though, we start thinking chrysanthemums and these truly offer designers an opportunity to create a visually stunning fall landscape.

My choice would be to buy Belgian mums that are in tight bud to give you the most-bang for your gardening dollar. Look for pink selections like Padre, Mollifetta and the new Akilon Pink that just came out this year.

Though I have been touting the Fireworks fountain grass for the landscape know that they are exceptional as the thriller plant in mixed containers. Partner them with many of



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Fireworks fountain grass is a great choice for a stunning thriller in mixed containers. Here it is partnered with Supertunia Indigo Charm.

the same plants I've already mentioned except this time they are used as fillers and spillers.

One thing is for certain, once you grow Fireworks it will be hard for you to go back to the same old purple fountain grass again.

Mandevilla Plants Can Winter Inside

Q: I received a beautiful Sun Parasol Crimson mandevilla plant for Mother's Day that I planted in the backyard. It is thriving, growing up my trellis and is truly beautiful. My neighbor told me it's an annual. Is there any way I can pot it and bring it into the house this fall so I can replant again next summer?

A: Mike Rimland of Costa Farms, which grows Sun Parasol mandevillas, said it's possible to pot your plant and bring it indoors for winter. The process of preparing it for the move takes four to six weeks, however, so make sure you give yourself enough time before the average first frost

date (Oct. 18 in the Akron area).

Here's what Rimland recommended:

Start by using a spade or shovel to slice straight down into the dirt in a circle all around your plant. That circle should be a couple of inches beyond where the edges of the original pot would have been. This severs the roots and encourages them to start new, smaller roots.

Three or four weeks later, dig the plant out of the ground, digging the root ball a quarter-inch to a half-inch beyond the circle you created. Transfer the plant to an appropriate-size pot with a saucer, and put it in a shaded

area outdoors for one to two weeks.

Then bring the plant indoors and place it within a foot of an east or west window. Make sure the light isn't blocked by an overhang or by curtains or other window coverings. If possible, move the plant to a similarly unobstructed southern window around Nov. 15.

Give the plant a quart of water about every two weeks, pouring the water as slowly as you can. If any excess water flows out the bottom of the pot into the saucer, leave it there for two hours to give the plant time to absorb it, then dump the excess. Let the plant go dry between waterings.

Don't fertilize your mandevilla while it's indoors. It won't flower, but it should survive.

Around May 1, put the plant outdoors in the shade for a couple of weeks. Be sure to watch for frost warnings and bring it into a sheltered area if frost is expected. After that time, replant it and give it some slow-release fertilizer.

NEWS AROUND THE CLOCK

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Meet Dr. Kudera, Orthopedic Surgeon

YANKTON MEDICAL CLINIC, P.C. IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE ASSOCIATION OF **Jeremy Kudera, M.D.**

Board Eligible Orthopedic Surgeon

Dr. Kudera is originally from Dell Rapids, SD and completed his undergraduate degree at The University of South Dakota where he was a student-athlete. He is a graduate of Sanford School of Medicine-University of South Dakota. Dr. Kudera completed his Orthopedic Surgery residency training at Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN, and is board eligible.

Dr. Kudera will provide care for a multitude of musculoskeletal conditions including joint replacement of the knee, hip, and shoulder, treatment of athletic injuries, adult and pediatric fracture care, rotator cuff repair, and treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome.

Please join with us in welcoming Dr. Kudera, his wife, Jennifer, and their son, Jackson, to Yankton.

Dr. Kudera will begin seeing patients at Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C. August 23, 2010. Appointments can be made by calling 605-665-1722.



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