

# Established Zoysia Maintenance Guide

By

## SUMMIT HALL

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### PROPAGATION OF MEYER Z-52 ZOYSIA

Meyer zoysia is vegetatively propagated. This means it is planted as sod, plugs, or sprigs. There is no seed for Meyer zoysia.

There are two major methods the homeowner can use to convert their lawn to zoysia. Purchase either sod or plugs.

If you purchase sod you can start your own nursery. To give you some idea of what your foundation stock would yield: 5 square feet of zoysia sod would yield from 800 to over 2400 plugs within 3 growing seasons.

Zoysia plugs from Summit Hall have a 2" diameter. These plugs are 2" deep and contain plenty of roots.

Plugs planted on 6 inch centers in your existing lawn should cover your lawn in two growing seasons. The rows should be staggered (like a checker-board) for faster coverage. Plugs planted in a worked (tilled) plant bed will cover much faster.

### MANAGEMENT OF ZOYSIA: ESTABLISHMENT

When forcing your plugs for fast coverage you should use a soluble source of nitrogen such as urea on a 4 week schedule. Most 10-10-10 or 10-6-4 fertilizers will contain soluble sources of nitrogen. These soluble sources applied during the summer months will force faster plug growth and reduce any cool season grass

competition. Don't use these soluble sources later than August. This last fertilization will help maintain good color into the fall.

Make sure that the soil does not dry out where the zoysia sod or plugs are newly planted. Proper watering is important.

### ESTABLISHED ZOYSIA LAWNS

This guide has been prepared to provide you with a step-by-step chronological listing of how to manage your Meyer zoysia lawn. Many variations can be used. However, we have provided you with the most correct up-to-date information available, and highly recommend that you follow this program for best results.

#### **April**

- (a) Begin mowing the lawn at 1 inch. It may be difficult to mow at 1 inch with some rotary mowers, but try to set your mower as close to 1 inch as you can, hopefully no higher than 1 ½ inches. It will be beneficial to collect your clippings if they are more than ½ inch long or they are clumping in rows or piles around the yard. It is best to mow when the grass is dry.
- (b) If you wish to core aerify the lawn, do so in early to mid April. (Read more about this later in the paragraph on **Aerifying**.)

- (c) If you wish to determine the presence of adult billbugs in your lawn, you may do so by using *pitfall traps*. A quick internet search on “how to make a pitfall trap” will tell you what you need to know about making your own traps.

## May

- (a) Continue mowing as above.
- (b) Once your zoysia has fully greened up, you may fertilize with a moderate application of slow-release fertilizer, like Scotts Turf Builder.
- (c) Water deeply if there is any indication of dryness. A deep watering should require 1-3 hours per setting or ½ to 1 inch of water depending on soil type. Stop watering before run-off occurs.
- (d) You may start a preventative insecticide program using newer chemistry season long grub control products. Apply them from mid May to mid June.

## June

- (a) Continue mowing as above.
- (b) Water when necessary, following above directions. Remember, regular “deep” waterings every 1-3 weeks will maintain the most beautiful lawn.
- (c) Optional 2<sup>nd</sup> fertilizer application. If your lawn looks healthy, and you are satisfied with its color of green no fertilization is needed. A common mistake in maintaining a zoysia lawn is over-fertilization. If you have some isolated areas that look weak from some form of damage, you may spot treat and water those areas to force the zoysia to recover just like you would be forcing plugs to spread (see above paragraph on **Management of Zoysia: Establishment**).

## July

- (a) Continue mowing and watering as above.

## August

- (a) Continue mowing and watering as above.
- (b) Optional final fertilization. See **June (c)**

## September

- (a) Continue mowing and watering as above.
- (b) Have the soil tested and if the pH is low, apply the appropriate amount of limestone in the fall. Lime moves down in the soil extremely slowly and the freezing and thawing during the winter months helps it penetrate.
- (c) Optional winter annual pre-emergence weed control.
- (d) Optional 1 to 2 pounds per 1000 square feet of potassium.

## MOWING YOUR MEYER ZOYSIA

Although a razor sharp, rotary-type mower may be used – the most well groomed appearance will be achieved if a reel-type mower with a *high frequency of cutting action* (5 or more blades) is used. Many manufacturers have mowers such as this available.

Meyer zoysia may be mowed much closer than ordinary types of grass, as low as ½ inch, even during the hot summer months. You should set mowers to cut at a height not exceeding 1 ½ inches.

CAUTION – Never mow close after letting your grass grow high. The rule of thumb is to never remove more than one third to one half of the leaf blade per cutting.

## WATERING YOUR MEYER ZOYSIA

After the lawn is fully established, it will only require infrequent deep waterings, essential to encourage a deep and vigorous root system. This type of root system will enable the lawn to withstand long periods of drought. As a guide in determining when to water, look at the grass blades – if they appear curled or needled, the lawn needs watering.

## FEEDING OR FERTILIZING ESTABLISHED MEYER ZOYSIA

Some types of slow release fertilizers are recommended in this program. Other similar alternatives are available and will prove satisfactory. If your garden products supplier does not carry those

recommended, he can tell you what products he does carry that are similar. Simply request a slowly released complete fertilizer.

Always apply fertilizers when the grass is dry as some fertilizers DO BURN. Always water the lawn well after fertilizing.

It is recommended that caution is exercised when applying fertilizer, so as to not cause skips or overlapping. Use of a rotary or spinner type spreader will eliminate most of this problem. Remember, only 1-2 pounds of actual nitrogen (the first number on the fertilizer bag) per 1000 square feet is required for a healthy zoysia lawn. Over fertilizing zoysia creates excess thatch.

### **THATCH**

Thatch is an accumulation of dead vegetative material at the crown of grass plants (crown is at soil level). If sufficient amounts accumulate, it can be the breeding medium of disease organisms and harmful insects. (It will also block the movement of water, fertilizer, lime and insecticides into the soil.) Thatch conditions can be reduced by removing grass clippings as one mows the turf area. However, thatch will also accumulate annually as a result of the turf going dormant. This cannot be prevented. Thatch can be removed with a machine called a power rake or verticut. These machines can be rented from a garden store, hardware store or tool rental company. Many lawn service companies offer this type of service.

De-thatching should be done every 3 to 5 years depending on how fast the material accumulates (1/2" or more should be de-thatched). This should be done in early spring.

### **INSECTS AND INSECTICIDES**

Insects are a problem in all types of lawns in the Washington area. In order to protect your lawn investment, it is recommended that you follow an insecticide program using one of the newer season long grub control products.

### **DISEASES AND FUNGICIDES**

Brown patch, zoysia patch, dollar spot and rust are some diseases that affect zoysia. Usually under proper management these are not a problem. However, these diseases can be controlled by using some of the broad-spectrum fungicides available. When using these fungicides, follow the manufacturer's directions for application rates.

### **AERIFYING**

Aerifying, i.e. core aeration, is probably the single most important thing you can do for your zoysia lawn. It is a mechanical cultivation process where small 1/2 - 3/4" diameter and 1-3" deep plugs or cores of soil are poked throughout the lawn area. The cores are left on top of the yard and soon break up and disappear. The soil from the cores "inoculate" the thatch layer and help to keep thatch buildup to a minimum. The many, unseen aeration holes throughout the lawn have a variety of benefits. They relieve compaction, increase oxygen exchange and promote a route for better water and nutrient exchange. Zoysia aeration should be done in the spring with a rental machine, or contract the work to a landscaper.

**Your efforts in following the above instructions will reward you with the most beautiful, functional and environmentally friendly lawn in your neighborhood.**