

DROUGHT TOLERANT Grasses for your Landscape

4 EASY STEPS TOWARD SAVING WATER

A Homeowner's Guide to a Beautiful Lawn while Saving Water



In Pocatello's semi-arid climate, many grasses need a lot of supplemental irrigation to stay lush and green. It's important to limit water-consuming lawn grass to areas in the landscape where it will be most useful and can be efficiently watered.

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Prepared by the
Marshall Public Library and the
Pocatello Tree Commission

1. SELECT THE RIGHT GRASS

Many varieties of turf grass are available, depending on your location and needs. The “perfect” grass doesn’t exist—every grass has its good and bad points. With a little planning, homeowners can select the right grass for each situation. *(Suggested drought-tolerant grasses on reverse are featured in the Library's Xeriscape Garden)*

2. EVALUATE AND PREPARE THE SOIL

A soil test can determine the structure and make-up of your soil and help you make better decisions in preparing your landscape. There should be a minimum of 4 to 6 inches of loose, amended soil in order for turf to perform well.

3. SEED OR INSTALL SOD

To seed a lawn, sow the recommended number of pounds per 1000 square feet uniformly across the area. Lightly rake the seed into the soil, being careful not to go too deep. If desired, cover with a light mulch of straw or sphagnum peat moss. Finally, use a roller to firm the soil surface.

4. WATER THE NEW LAWN

A newly-seeded lawn must be kept moist, but not saturated, until the seeds germinate. Depending on the temperature and site conditions, this may mean watering for a short time, several times a day. As the grass begins to grow, reduce the frequency of watering. After four to six weeks, watering should be reduced to the amount recommended for an established lawn of the type planted.

For new sod, water enough to ensure that the soil beneath the sod stays moist, but not waterlogged. Water twice a day for the first week, and once a day for the second week. At this point, roots should be established in the new soil, and watering can be reduced to the amount recommended for an established lawn of that type. Reprogram your sprinkler as the temperature changes.

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VISIT THE
Marshall Public Library
Xeriscape Garden

113 S. Garfield Ave.
Pocatello, ID 83204

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www.marshallpl.org

RECOMMENDED Xeriscape Grasses

The following four grasses are found in Marshall Public Library's Xeriscape Garden. Are all drought-tolerant and recommended for Pocatello's climate and soils.

Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*)

A WARM SEASON BUNCH GRASS

Height: Grows to 8 - 15 inches; mow to a height of 2.5 - 3 inches or leave unmowed to allow development of attractive seedheads

Watering: .5 to .75 of an inch every 2 weeks during hot, dry spells

Sun/Shade: Likes full sun; poor to fair shade tolerance

Traffic: Fair tolerance to traffic during periods of active growth

Texture: Fine blades with soft texture during periods of active growth

Color: Blue-green

Seeding: In spring when soil reaches 60° up until 10 weeks before fall frost

Advantages: Attractive and requires minimal water and fertilizer once established; won't invade flower or vegetable beds; good for sunny areas such as slopes where foot traffic is minimal; grows well in clay and low fertility soils; few insect or disease problems; very heat- and drought-tolerant; goes dormant when stressed and can stay dormant for extended periods

Disadvantages: Not very traffic tolerant during dormancy (October to May); weeds and weed control can be a problem,

especially during establishment; seed and plugs are expensive; does not perform well as a lawn above 6500 feet

Tall Fesue (*Festuca arundinacea*)

A COOL SEASON BUNCH GRASS

Height: Grows to 24 - 48 inches, mow to a height of 3 inches

Watering: .5 to 1 inch every week during hot, dry spells

Sun/Shade: Likes full sun to moderate shade

Traffic: Good tolerance

Texture: Wide leaf blades with coarse texture

Color: Dark green

Seeding: Spring or fall when temperature is between 60-75°

Advantages: Attractive; does well in shade; few insect or disease problems; won't invade flower or vegetable beds; lower fertility requirements

Disadvantages: Requires regular supplemental irrigation; because of the fibrous root system, bare spots will need to be reseeded; wider blades may shred when mower blades are dull

Sodar Wheatgrass (*Elymus lanceolatus*)

A COOL SEASON SOD-FORMING GRASS

Height: Grows to 12 - 18 inches, mow to height of 3 - 4 inches minimum, do not mow the year of establishment until seedheads appear

Watering: .5 to .75 of an inch every 2 weeks during hot, dry spells, do not over-water

Sun/Shade: Likes full sun to moderate shade

Traffic: Fair tolerance to traffic

Texture: Wide leaf blades with coarse texture

Color: Blue-green

Seeding: Early spring or late fall

Advantages: Germinates easily; goes dormant when stressed, easily revived; needs only occasional mowing to stay neat; little fertilizer

needed; excellent erosion control; doesn't attract wildlife, excellent weed barrier when established

Disadvantages: Produces numerous stems and seed head the first few years; not tolerant of wet or poorly drained soil

Buffalograss (*Bouteloua dactyloides*)

A WARM SEASON SOD-FORMING GRASS

Height: Grows to 4 - 8 inches, mow to a height of 2 - 2.5 inches, or leave unmowed

Watering: .5 to .75 of an inch every 2 weeks during hot, dry spells

Sun/Shade: Likes full sun; poor to fair shade tolerance

Traffic: Fair to good tolerance to traffic during periods of active growth

Texture: Fine blades with soft texture during periods of active growth

Color: Blue-green

Seeding: May and June

Advantages: Attractive and requires minimal water and fertilizer once established; good for sunny areas such as slopes where foot traffic is minimal; grows well in heavy clay soils; few insect or disease problems; low fertility requirement; very heat and drought tolerant; goes dormant when stressed and can stay dormant for extended periods

Disadvantages: Not very traffic tolerant during dormancy (October to May); weed control can be a problem; more prone to weed invasion when over-fertilized; stolons will invade vegetable and flower beds; will not grow in sandy soils; does not perform well as a lawn above 6000 feet