

# Choose Utility Grasses With Care: Not All Are Suitable

Not all grasses are suitable for lawns. Grass species differ greatly in growth habit, the ability to tolerate adverse conditions, response to soil fertility, and ability to resist plant diseases or insects. Many of the grass species we use in our home lawns require intensive cultivation and fertility to survive.

Folks often ask me what grass would do best with minimal input. Assuming that the grass will be used in a very low traffic and looks-are-not-important area, I will often recommend bahia grass (*Paspalum notatum*).

Bahia grass is a true utility grass. A native of the great pampas of South America, bahia grass is seeded extensively by the North Carolina Department of Transportation in roadside plantings in southern coastal and piedmont areas. Some of the good traits of bahia grass in-

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clude tolerance to nematodes, ability to grow in poor soils, a low fertilization requirement, and resistance to almost all insects and diseases.

Sound like a perfect turf grass? The major drawback to bahia grass is that it is very difficult to cut and the black-forked seed head emerges continuously during hot weather. I have never met a homeowner that like an established bahia grass turf in their yard.

A sterile variety (no seed produced) of bahia grass called "Wilmington" was available in past years, but I know of no sod farms in North Carolina presently growing this cultivar.

However, help is on the way. Several turf grass plant breeders are working on new varieties of bahia grass that will have greater aesthetic appeal and fewer seed heads.

Another utility grass is carpet grass (*Axonopus affinis*). Carpet grass is native to central America and is extremely well adapted to wet, acidic, infertile soils. It is also prone to be killed during an unusually cold winter.

If you have a poorly drained soil that needs cover, carpet grass may be the answer. Carpet grass will not tolerate drought, salt spray, or foot traffic. In some southern states, carpet grass is used in the roadside

seed mixes because of rapid seed germination and tolerance of wet soil sites.

Unfortunately, one of the most commonly planted utility grasses is common bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*). Common bermuda grass will tolerate just about all condi-

tions except infertile soils, shade, and wet soils. Gardeners know bermuda grass by other common names like devil grass, quick grass, wire grass, and !X#\* & @\* & grass.

Common bermuda grass requires substantial management to produce an excellent high quality turf but if

neglected will thin out and give way to centipede grass and bahia grass. Select you utility grasses with care because if you do not, they will be your weed problems tomorrow.

(Send your gardening questions to The Plant Doctor, P.O. Box 109, Bolivia, N.C. 28422.)

## Friends To Honor Clemmons

Longtime Brunswick County educator James "Jimbo" Clemmons died before the special day to honor him arrived.

But those who planned the event say Sunday's memorial program and tribute at Leland Middle School will go on as scheduled—because Clemmons would have wanted it that way.

"When Jimbo was informed of the dream, and the plans to make it a reality, he was elated," said the Rev. Thurman Everett.



CLEMMONS

Everett and Calvin Moore of Leland initially planned "A Day In School Honoring J.F. Clemmons" to help benefit Helping Hands in Brunswick County, a non-profit organization that volunteers its time and money to repair substandard homes for residents in need.

Instead, proceeds from Sunday's event will now provide scholarships for underprivileged children in Brunswick County.

"Jimbo realized that all of our lives are interwoven with each other and that our future is in the minds of our children," said Everett. "He therefore placed his investments in the future—girls and boys."

Clemmons was principal of Lincoln Primary School in Leland for more than 30 years and served two terms on the Brunswick County Board of Education. He died this past spring.

Everett, founder of Helping Hands, will deliver a morning worship message at 11 a.m. with special singing by the Community Mass Choir. Lunch will be served at 12:30 p.m. A special tribute to Clemmons is planned for 2:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$3 for children ages 6-12 and free for children under 6.

At least 17 speakers are scheduled, with each allotted no more than two minutes to talk about the man that influenced them in some way.

Scheduled to speak are Moore; Brunswick County Schools Superintendent P.R. Hankins; Joseph Butler, principal of Lincoln Primary; Ralph King, former school superintendent; the Rev. Edison Moore; Doug Baxley, school board member; Tom Simmons, assistant principal at Union Primary; Sandra Robinson, assistant principal at West Brunswick High;

Also, Bobby Brown, Navassa mayor; Russell Baldwin, Leland mayor; Ralph Parker Sr., director of minority affairs at UNC-Wilmington;

Shirley Babson, former school board member; Angela Moore, former student; Franklin Randolph, former school board member; Dorothy Wilson, family member; Thurman Everett, of Helping Hands; and Christine Hall, assistant principal of Leland Middle.

Music will be provided by The Gospel Ensemble of Brunswick County, The Spice of Life and Monica Richardson, a North Brunswick High graduate and now a student at Appalachian State University.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

### Shelter Receives Clock

The National Association of Retired Federal Employees presented a clock to Cathy Swaim (left), director of Hope Harbor Home, at the May 7 meeting. The clock was built and donated to NARFE by T.D. Pucket (right), who owns a clock shop in Long Beach.

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