

Centipede Grass Requires Very Low Maintenance

Dear Plant Doctor: I read with interest your recent column on lawn grass.

We seeded on May 21-22 using centipede grass in sandy soil. The landscaper assured me we would have some grass by late August-early September.

He worked the soil and filled in some areas with top soil. He fertilized using 10-10-10 and told me to water three times a day for 20 minutes each time. Per his instructions, I fertilized this weekend and will do it again in three weeks, six weeks and nine weeks.

Your column did not spend any time on centipede grass and only mentions it briefly.

I would like to report that we now have about 80 percent coverage and its looking great. I cut as necessary using the high setting on the mower. He told me that I should not worry about the weeds as the grass would choke them out. The landscaper told me that if I could be patient I'd have a great lawn with little maintenance.

So far I am happy with the results. I've been told centipede grass "Sleeps the first year, creeps the second year and grows the third year." I have trouble believing this grass will choke out the weeds.

Is what I've stated an unusual case or have I been lucky or what? I'd be interested in your thoughts on centipede grass in this area. Thank you.

THE PLANT DOCTOR

C. BRUCE WILLIAMS
Extension Area
Turf Specialist



Answer: In general your landscaper is giving you good advice. Centipede grass (*Eremochloa ophiuroides*) is a slow-growing, apple-green, coarse-leaved turf grass that does well for use as a low maintenance general purpose turf.

Centipede grass is quite different from other warm season turf grasses. This grass requires an acid soil (pH 5 to 5.8) and a low amount of nitrogen fertilizer for optimum stand longevity.

Excessive amounts of agricultural limestone will cause yellow patches (called "lime induced iron chlorosis") to develop in your lawn.

Heavy applications of nitrogen containing fertilizers will definitely cause centipede grass to green up and grow. Using high fertilizer rates in the first year of establishment is normally not detrimental to the survival of the grass.

However, if you continue to fertilize your established centipede grass lawn with high nitrogen fertil-

izers, your lawn will become prone to winter injury or centipede grass decline.

The use of 10-10-10 fertilizer to get your centipede grass lawn established is fine. Do not apply more than 10 pounds of fertilizer per 1,000 square feet at any one application. In the second and following years of establishment, apply 10 pounds of 5-5-15 or equivalent slow release fertilizer per 1,000 square feet in May or June. An optional application of potash in the fall may help your turf if soil is sandy and prone to high nutrient leaching. Research at N.C. State University indicates an application of 1.5 pounds of muriate of potash (0-0-60) or 2.0 pounds of potassium sulfate (0-0-50) per 1,000 square feet in the autumn (four to six weeks prior to frost) will help reduce winter injury in centipede grass.

Height of cut is very important with centipede grass. The optimum height of cut is 1 to 1.5 inches for centipede grass. Higher mowing heights are thought to encourage winter kill.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service has several excellent publications on centipede grass establishment and maintenance. I am sending you *Centipede Grass Lawn Maintenance Calendar* (NCCES publication AG-381) and *Problems on Centipede Grass* (Plant Pathology Note 241). These publications can be obtained from your local county extension agent or by sending your request and a stamped self-addressed envelope to The Plant Doctor.

By the way, I have always heard the saying "centipede grass sleeps the first year, creeps the second year and leaps the third year". Seems to be a fairly descriptive statement.

And yes, a healthy well maintained centipede grass lawn will have few weed problems. Centipede grass is more competitive for water and nutrients than most of its weed competitors.

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

Point VFD Sets Pancake Breakfast

Shallotte Point Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary will hold a sausage and pancake breakfast at the firehouse, Saturday, Aug. 3, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Coffee will be included, said spokesman Joyce Land, and proceeds will support the department.

The fire house is located on Bay Road, off Village Point Road.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Yard Earns Club Honors

An attractive, low maintenance landscape won Marion Smith (right above) the July Yard of the Month award from the Sunset Sands Garden Club in Sea Trails, represented by Mildred Bernard (left). Mrs. Smith's home at 113 Live Oak Drive nestles behind a border of redtips and large, easy to maintain sloping bed of pink verbena, daylilies and greenery of varied textures that includes creeping juniper, crape myrtle, yucca, pittisporum, pyracantha, holly and daylilies. Mrs. Smith and her late husband moved to the area 10 years ago from Dayton, Ohio. "Gardening was something new to me all around," she said, "but I've enjoyed it."

Civil War Romance Subject Of Area Teen's First Novel

Alicia M. Conn, a teen-ager from Long Beach, has drawn on the area's rich history in writing her first novel, *Till Caswell Fell*.

The novel is an expanded version of her short story that won the Robert Ruark Writing Contest last November.

Till Caswell Fell is set during the Civil War, with Fort Caswell, now the site of the North Carolina Baptist Assembly, as its backdrop. The story charts the blossoming romance of the fictional Georgia Fossett and Johnny Slate, a Confederate soldier; its interruption by the evacuation of the fort in January 1865; and their reunion after the war's end.

Published by Brentwood Christian Press in Columbus, Ga., the slim paperback novel features cover art by another local youth, Bennett Sligh of Caswell Beach.

While the 62-page story is fictional, it reflects Alicia's research of the fort and the role of the Cape Fear region during the Civil War as well as her familiarity with the area.

Alicia has been schooled at home most of her life, with drama, history and English literature her favorite subjects. She says she began writing short stories in 1988, at age 12.

The book has won encouragement and praise for its young author.

"Miss Conn has captured the spirit and history of Fort Caswell in a very enjoyable and readable format by weaving together its history with characters who give it life," wrote Richard M. Holbrook, director of the N.C. Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell.

Last month Alicia celebrated publication of *Till Caswell Fell* with a book-signing and recognition program at the N.C. Baptist Assembly. She presented copies of her book to representatives of various individuals and groups, including Sligh, the N.C. Children of the Confederacy, the N.C. Baptist Assembly, the Robert Ruark Foundation, the Southport Historical Society and the Brunswick Town Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Till Caswell Fell is available at several local bookstores.

4-H'ers Competed

Twenty local 4-H'ers competed in the recent South Central District 4-H Activity Day.

Of the 13 who entered presentation competition, five were named district winners and four others, runners-up. They will compete at the State Congress in July.

Eight members entered the 4-H Entertains talent competition.

Members in the presentation competition included: Joseph Hunt, beef char grill; Jessica Winfree, chicken barbecue, runner up; Jessica Jones, poultry, winner; Heidi Layman, dog, winner; Heather

Branch, pork char grill, winner; Kim Mays, small animals; Kristy Collette, artistic arrangement, winner; Phillip Hess, entomology, runner-up; Shameya Bryant, crafts; Becky Smith, breads, winner; Fetina Bryant, egg cookery, runner-up; Tracey Reaves, fruit and vegetable use; and Jennifer Hatcher, peanut foods, runner-up.

Members in the talent acts were Jeannie and Divisa, comedy; Amy Sidbury, Indigo Hill, Rashida Barbour, Nekesha Randolph, Tiffany McKoy and Shavon Dawson, dance.

Autumn Care Seeks Varied Volunteers

Autumn Care of Shallotte, a nursing facility for adults, is organizing a support group of volunteers to help improve the quality of lifestyle afforded residents.

A meeting is being held today (Thursday) at 2:30 p.m. at the center, 237 Mulberry Street in Shallotte to discuss ways volunteers can help meet residents' needs.

"We need all types of volunteers—church, corporate, children, men," said Wanda Ammons, activity coordinator. "We need anybody and everybody."

As examples of specific needs, Ms. Ammons said the center is looking for volunteers willing to work with male residents on pro-

jects such as woodworking, or to make bulletin boards or other items for a "school" being started for four men in their 20s with head injuries who live at the center.

If enough young people show an interest, Ms. Ammons would like to start an "Adopt A Grandparent" program, matching residents with children for companionship.

Those who are unable to volunteer their time can support the program by donating games, stuffed animals and personal care items for use as bingo game prizes.

Autumn Care serves 110 adults with varying care needs. Some residents require only custodial care, while others required skilled nursing care.

Smith Named Watch President

Zack Smith of the Zion Hill/Sunset Harbor Community Watch group will serve as president of the Brunswick County Community Watch Association for 1991-92.

Other officers recently elected by the association include Lee Miller Jr., vice president, of the Pinebur Acres group; Inga Arnold, treasurer, of the Zion Hill/Sunset Harbor group; and Cathy Stewart, secretary, of the Longwood group.

Sixteen "very active" watches are involved in the association, said Miller, while a number of watch groups participate at the neighborhood level only.

Community watch members learn steps to use in better protecting their selves and property, as well as for protecting their neighborhoods. They

cooperate with law enforcement agencies, reporting suspicious activities, vehicles or persons and keeping an eye on vacant or seasonal homes.

Miller said some of the county association's projects this past year included placing Teddy bears in sheriff's patrol cars for children who may be involved in auto accidents and other traumatic incidents and sponsoring a Christmas parade float. The association also hopes to participate in the 1991 N.C. Oyster Festival.

Anyone interested in organizing a community watch group in their neighborhood can contact Don Gates, crime prevention officer with the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, 253-4321, or any of the above officers.

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