

Drought Proof Your Lawn: *Soil Amendments and Grass Varieties*

If you are planting a new lawn, make smart choices now to beat drought in the future. Proper preparation of soil and choosing a good grass type are key steps that will help ensure your lawn can survive the heat.

Adding large amounts of organic matter to your soil will pay dividends long into the future. Healthy soil makes healthy grass and organic matter is the most important component of healthy soil. Compost can be obtained from the Timpanogos Special Service District at a reasonable cost. Also, many horse stables have weed-free manure mixed with wood shavings that can usually be obtained for little or no cost. If you do obtain organic material from a horse stable, it may be beneficial to also add a nitrogen supplement to assist in the initial breakdown of the wood chips. When you have obtained your organic material, spread 3 inches of it over the area to be planted and till it into the top six inches of soil. The resulting mixture will be able to hold more water, be less likely to compact, and it will have microbes and structure enabling a faster and healthier establishment of turf.

Once your soil is in tip top shape, look at grass varieties that offer either drought resistance or the ability to tap deep moisture. Zoysia and fescue are two varieties that provide these benefits.

Zoysia is a rhizomous grass that endures heat well. It is extremely weed resistant and requires less mowing than traditional lawn varieties. It stays green during the hottest and driest of summer days, but does go dormant earlier in the year and stays dormant longer into spring than traditional bluegrass, rye, and fescue blends.

Fescue is a wear tolerant and very deep rooted grass that can tap into subsurface moisture to a depth of several feet. Many areas here in Lehi have a high water table that fescue grass can take advantage of. Newer varieties of fescue are fine-bladed with a deep green coloration that is far superior to the course fescue varieties of the past.

Watch for weekly articles about how to drought proof your lawn. Questions may be directed to Darwin Bundy at dbundy@lehi-ut.gov.