

## LATE SEASON SODDING

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It is commonly recommended that sods can be transplanted anytime during the growing season if there are 3-4 weeks of favorable moisture and temperature following installation, and if irrigation is available during periods of drought stress. Research has shown that bermudagrass root growth is significantly reduced when average temperatures drop below 60° F. In the Atlanta area, this would generally occur the first of November. Generally temperatures would not reach this level again until the latter part of April. These observations generally agree with the normal dormant period of most warm season turfgrasses and is commonly recognized as a risky period of sodding. However, substantial quantities of sod are transplanted during this period of slow growth or dormancy from November to April.

Dormant or off-season (October - April) sodding provides the following advantages: 1. improves the environment by reducing erosion, mud, dust and weeds around buildings; 2. increases occupancy rates of newly finished construction projects such as homes and buildings; and 3. extends the producer's and landscape contractor's production time, thus reducing the peak demand season.

The survival of sod transplanted at this time is mainly dependent upon avoiding winter desiccation and low temperature injury. Desiccation can be a significant problem because newly transplanted sod has a limited root system. The warm dry winds of late winter and early spring increase the demand for water, but the combination of low soil temperatures and a limited root system will reduce the plant's ability to obtain water. Direct low temperature injury can be a problem because the crowns, stolons and shallow rhizomes of some turfgrass may be killed. Under such conditions, turf recovery is possible only from deep rhizomes which newly sodded turf lacks.

Research and practical experience has shown that bermudagrass may be successfully sodded during the off-season (October - April) when the grass is still growing slowly or dormant. Overseeding sod with ryegrass may reduce bermudagrass vigor and quality, and certainly complicate survival. However, successful transplanting of bermudagrass is highly dependent on having a healthy sod, which is hard to determine when sod is dormant or overseeded. It is probably prudent but less practical to collect samples of questionable sods and place in a protected area and evaluate its vigor at the time of planting.

Based on these findings and the winter hardiness of other turfgrasses, it is logical that off-season (October-April) sodding of zoysiagrass and centipedegrass in and north of Atlanta may result in more winter injury than hybrid bermudagrass.

Successful sod transplanting depends on proper soil preparation, good soil-to-sod contact, avoiding low temperature injury, and most important, proper water management to prevent desiccation.