



Texas born and bred, HABITURF™ is the ideal solution to Texas' extreme weather conditions. This native turfgrass was developed through years of research by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at The University of Texas at Austin into native grasses mixes that would provide the best performance.

# HABITURF™

THE ECOLOGICAL LAWN



## What is HABITURF™

Years of research at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center has produced a mixture of native grass species suitable for Texas and dry regions of the Southwest. Look inside for instructions for establishing a native lawn using this mix.



## BUFFALOGRASS VS. BERMUDAGRASS.

The native mix (LEFT) grows much slower and has fewer weeds than bermudagrass (RIGHT).

HABITURF™ is dense and attractive, soft to the touch and comfy on bare feet. It establishes quickly and, best of all, conserves precious resources once established. Our research shows it compares favorably to commonly-used non-native turfgrass species in its ability to thrive with minimal watering. It requires less mowing and weeding to retain its eye appeal and stands up well to moderate foot traffic.

A mix of native grass species that grow in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona developed and tested by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.



## THE MIX.

HABITURF™ is a mix of *Bouteloua dactyloides* (buffalograss), *Bouteloua gracilis* (blue grama) and *Hilaria belangeri* (curly-mesquite). It needs less mowing, watering and weeding and also replicates nature's shortgrass prairies. Although the species are different, these grasses have almost identically shaped leaves and color and produce a great-looking, even-textured, dense lawn that does well in full sun but also tolerates 50 percent shade. The mixes are available from native seed suppliers such as Douglass King Company and Native American Seed. For every 1,000 square feet you will need about 3 to 4 pounds of HABITURF™

## SOIL.

A well-textured, well-drained soil is essential for long-term lawn success. Normally, after construction, developers spread a couple of inches of imported soil over existing soil compacted by heavy construction machinery. A sustainable lawn needs deep roots, so rip, till or disk your soil to at least 8 inches — the deeper the better. Then incorporate a ½ inch layer of living compost with a low nitrogen and low phosphorus content into the top 3 inches of your prepared soil. DO NOT use tree bark, wood shavings or mulch. Grass won't grow in this. The soil surface should be finished to a fine granular texture and free from large stones.

## SOW.

Sow the seed — the small, hand-cranked seed broadcasters are great or by hand — and rake and press with a garden roller or your feet. Seeds need good soil contact. Spring is the best sowing time once soil temperatures warm up (day time temperatures constantly above 85F). Later in the growing season also works well but

will require more water. Avoid sowing in late fall and winter (October through mid-March).

## IRRIGATION.

The lawn area should be irrigated every day for the first 10 days or longer, up to 15 days, under very hot, dry or windy conditions to prevent the soil from drying out. Thereafter,



two soil-wetting (top 4 inches of soil) events per week for the next month, then two soil-wetting (top 6 inches of soil minimum) events per month for the remainder of the growing season which is March through November. Remove weeds as they appear before they go to seed or become too established. Once the lawn is established in three to four months, you may opt to stop irrigating to save water and allow the lawn to go 'drought dormant'. The native grasses will go brown and temporarily stop growing but, adapted to drought, will green up once rain returns. In prolonged drought (say over 6 weeks in summer with no rain) irrigate (if allowed) once every five to six weeks. This will not trigger "green-up" but will keep the dormant turf alive.

## MOWING.

We suggest a 3 to 4-inch cut for great-looking, dense turf, resistant to weeds and light to moderate foot traffic. However, a 6-inch cut will produce a beautiful deeper lawn. Mow once every three to five weeks when growing and not at all when drought or cold dormant. Mowing shorter — 2 inches or less — will damage your lawn's health. Conversely, not mowing at all through the growing season will produce a longer turf (8 inches or so) with lower density. This may be acceptable depending on how you use your lawn. However, allowing the grass to seed-out once a year — insurance against drought, heavy foot traffic and weeds.

Make sure that the lawn overwinters as a thick lush turf greater than 4 inches high. Observations have clearly shown that this dramatically reduces weeds the following spring — such as clover, dandelions and thistles. This means that the last mow should be a high (> 4 inches) mow and no later than mid-October.

## FEEDING.

If you return the grass cuttings directly to the soil, annual feeding should not be necessary. A healthy, living soil with live compost plus the natural 'rain' of airborne nutrients will be sufficient to keep your lawn at ecological equilibrium just like a natural prairie. But for high-use lawns with children and/or pets, or on freely-draining soils, a fall dressing with a low-nutrient, living compost or compost tea plus aeration with a garden fork will certainly help.