NATIVE GRASS LAWNS

INTRODUCTION

This TECHnote discusses several of the native grass species suitable for lawn applications. Native grass lawns are generally low maintenance, drought tolerant and will grow in a wide variety of soil types. Once established, they require less mowing and watering than exotic varieties and little, if any, fertilising. However, compared to introduced species, native grasses are generally slower to establish and, if grown from seed or tube-stock, weed control during establishment is required to achieve a good result. Native lawns also tend to be less wear-tolerant and are not suited to high-traffic areas.

NATIVE GRASS SPECIES

The 4 species tabled above are suitable for lawn applications. Nara is the first Australian native lawn grass available in rolls. The other species can be sown from seed, grow-cells or tube-stock.

Species	Tolerances and characteristics
Nara (Prickly couch) *Zoysia macrantha MAC03*	Appearance: Fine textured leaf. Soils: Sandy, sandy loam, clay. Shade tolerance: Good. Drought tolerance: High. Frost tolerance: Browns off in winter. Requires fertilising in autumn and winter to maintain colour. Salt tolerance: High. Mowing height: 20-50 mm sunny areas. 50-70 mm shaded areas. Mow every 1-2 weeks in spring/summer, 3-8 weeks in autumn/winter. Wear: Moderate to good. *Note: Nara is a relatively new native lawn variety. Consult your local turf supplier for information on its suitability for your project.*
Wallaby grass *Austrodanthonia*	Appearance: Tufted grass, fine textured leaf, mid green colour. Soils: Medium clays to light sandy loams with good drainage. Shade tolerance: Good. Drought tolerance: High. Frost tolerance: High. Mowing height: No lower than 40 mm. Mow 6 times a year. Wear: Moderate.
Red grass *Bothriochloa macra*	Appearance: Low growing tussock grass. Deep green, fine leaved grass. Turns a red colour in winter. Soils: Prefers dry but will grow in moist soils. Shade tolerance: Above average. Drought tolerance: High drought and heat tolerance. Frost tolerance: Low to moderate. Mowing height: 40-50 mm. Mow once or twice a year. Wear: Good.
Weeping grass *Microlaena stipoides*	Appearance: Tufted perennial grass. Remains green throughout the year with sufficient rainfall. Soils: Prefers acidic soils. Will grow on sandy loams and loamy clays. Shade tolerance: High. Drought tolerance: High. Frost tolerance: High. Mowing height: 40-50 mm. Mow 3 or 4 times a year. Salt tolerance: Medium. Wear: Moderate.

COMMON SPECIFICATION ISSUES

Before specifying native grass, seek expert advice on the following:

- Species choice: Do site conditions suit the requirements of the selected species?
- Availability: Check seed availability before specifying.
- Sowing rates: High rates are required for a high density of plants, and heavier sowing rates are generally required for weed laden soils.
- Timing: Options for autumn/winter and spring/summer sowing.
- Provenance: Source or origin of local indigenous species.



Nara (Prickly couch)



Wallaby grass



Red grass



Weeping grass

Relevant worksections

0250 Landscape – combined

0252 Landscape – natural grass surfaces

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