

Managing Drought in Louisiana Horticulture Crops



Lawns

It is normal for your lawn to lose its color and go brown during periods of drought. This is called drought-induced dormancy. Your lawn is simply waiting until it receives adequate rainfall, at which time it will resume growing again. If the drought continues for months, supplemental irrigation may be needed to reduce the chance of seeing dead grass.



Tips for periods of drought:

- **Irrigate your lawn** with up to an inch of water per week to help ease it through a drought. Deep, infrequent irrigation encourages healthy root growth.
- **Mow at the highest recommended height for your lawn species.** During extreme drought, mowing any species below 2 inches would not be recommended.
- Do not mow stressed grass. **Avoid mowing during the heat of the day.**
- **Do not fertilize drought-stressed grass.** If your lawn has browned relatively uniformly, it is most likely a water-related problem and fertilizer will not remedy the situation.

If you are following these practices, you're doing the best you can for your lawn. Even the drought-tolerant, warm-season grasses grown throughout Louisiana have a limit for what they're willing to tolerate prior to entering dormancy. Although it is not 100% guaranteed, your lawn will more than likely bounce right back after a few timely rains.

If you're nervous about your grass actually being dead rather than dormant, you can remove a few plugs of the grass in question and put them in a pot of soil. Give it plenty of water and a bright window and see if anything greens up after a few days.



Turfgrass plugs growing in a container.
Photo by Eric DeBoer

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