

## **Centipede grass turning red, yellow, or purple**

A sea of green around our homes is our idea of a healthy lawn. What do we do when grass is not green? Here are some colors that gardeners do not like to see in their lawn.

There are two basic types of centipede grass. One type turns yellow when it is stressed. The other kind turns red. We sometimes see red streaks where the tires of the mower run. On closer inspection, we may find that the lawn is suffering due to hard compacted soils or too frequent watering. Take a shovel and try to sink it into the dirt. Can you dig at least eight inches fairly easily? If not, the soil is probably compacted. Water the soil well and then core aerate. Use an aerator that pulls plugs out of the ground.

Are you watering more often than once a week? If so, begin to water deeply once a week. Apply three-quarter inches of water each time. How long should this take? Put a shallow container (a pie pan or tuna can) under the sprinkler and turn it on. Time the system to see how long it takes to put out three-quarters of an inch. Water this long each time.

If you have been watering every other day, you may have damaged the lawn. Slowly reduce how often you water and increase the volume you water until you are on this program. Twice a week may not be too often, but see how your lawn responds on the once a week program

Grey grass is an indication of lack of water. One area of the lawn will often turn grey first. The soil may be compacted, very sandy, or the sprinkler may not hit it well. Find and solve the problem.

Healthy centipede grass should be a yellow-green color. Do not fertilize it so much that it stays dark green all the time. If you do, your centipede may go into decline. Centipede sometimes turns completely yellow. This is due to stress or centipede decline. Find and remove the stress. To green up centipede or other lawns, you can treat with a chelated iron product. Once again, do not try to keep centipede grass green with fertilizer.

St. Augustine may also turn yellow. Check for chinch bugs, disease or hard and dry soils. In Bermuda and Zoysia, look for drought or disease problems.

Centipede can even be white and red striped. Each blade can have white and red streaks running through it. Though this sounds pretty, it is not. This can be an indication of a spittle bug infestation. Look for the masses of spittle deep in the turf. These hide the young, which feed on the grass. The adults are brown to black, 3/8 inch long with two orange stripes. They hop and fly across the yard. It takes a lot of spittle bugs to damage centipede grass. Do not spray unless you see lots of damage like this. Spittle bugs are worse on over watered and thatchy lawns. Water as I mentioned before, mow at the correct height (one to one and one-half inches) and there should be less of a problem. We should seldom need to spray for them.