



FLORASOURCE, Ltd.[®]



Establishing 'UC Verde[®]' Buffalograss



Receipt of Plugs

Immediately open boxes upon arrival; if a large order on pallets, unload from cardboard trays. Place plugs in an open area in half-day sun, preferably protected from wind. Plugs can be held for several days prior to planting but will need to be kept moist by watering at least daily in warm weather.

Site Preparation

For New Lawns: Planting area should be free of debris, stones, weeds, etc. A bit of extra attention at this time is worth it! Area to be plugged should be firmed by lightly rolling after final grade is established.

For Renovated Lawns:

(a) Conversion from a Bluegrass or Tall Fescue Lawn: Trials at UC Riverside have demonstrated that it is very difficult to change out an old lawn with 'UC Verde' in a "live on live" situation by planting 'UC Verde' into a living bluegrass or tall fescue lawn. For best results, the old lawn should be physically removed (dug up) or killed by utilizing a solar tarp. Both of these methods involve time and labor but are the more sustainable options for getting rid of a lawn. Still another option would be to kill the existing lawn with a selective herbicide; contact a landscape professional for details.

In changing over from a bluegrass or tall fescue lawn, the killed lawn may be left in place. This saves time, labor and landfill space, and the former lawn will serve as a mulch for the new plugs, keeping weeds out and conserving moisture.

For this approach, mow the killed lawn to ½" height or as low as possible. Using a 2" aeration drill bit, the 'UC Verde' plugs can be planted by drilling through the old lawn surface (see planting details re: proper planting depth, below). Following planting, a light application (1/4" depth) of a lawn topper will help further retain moisture and encourage the stolons (runners) of 'UC Verde' to root through the old lawn.

Note: Do not attempt to plant plugs into existing Bermuda grass or St Augustine lawn, or lawns with large presence of crabgrass; these grasses spread both above ground *and* below ground. Because of their aggressive nature, these grasses are best killed with herbicide applications. Removal of the top soil layer may be an option, but costly. Consult a professional lawn service firm or qualified retail nursery for further information.

Planting



Make sure that plugs are well-watered before planting, either by hand watering well or by a brief soaking of the plug trays in a sink or large container.

Plugs should be planted level with garden soil; that is, the plug soil level should be even with the ground around it. It is okay to err on the side of planting too deep; this will not hurt the grass plug. **DO NOT plant the plugs too high**...leaving a portion of the sides of the plug exposed to air will cause wicking and the plugs will dry out too quickly.

Rabbits? They will chew the plugs down to a nub, so best to keep them away for the first 4-6 weeks with fencing, a dog or the like. If this is not practical, note that the 'UC Verde' plugs can be planted deep, placing the crown of the plant half an inch or so below soil. By doing so, rabbits may graze but will not harm crown of plant.

OPTIONAL ZEBA® PRE-TREATMENT:

ZEBA® is a corn-starch polymer product that can help soil retain moisture: the particles will retain up to 400 times their weight in water, and unlike the old, petroleum based polymers, they will release the water as needed.

We like to recommend ZEBA for summer-time plantings, where there is any concern about sprinkler coverage, for slope plantings, and also for areas where there may be irrigation restrictions (designated landscape watering days).

The product comes in one ounce packets and is mixed with 5 gallons of water; a one ounce packet of ZEBA will treat up to 1,000 plugs, or about a 1,000 square foot lawn area, when plugs planted 12" on center.

If you have purchased ZEBA with your plugs, prepare the solution by mixing into 5 gallons of water. MIX small amounts VERY SLOWLY; adding this product all at once will produce clumps and it will not dissolve evenly thereafter.

ZEBA may be ordered at time of plug purchase, and ships along with them.

Watering

One of the many great features of 'UC Verde' Buffalograss is the tremendous water savings you will experience over time: up to 80% less water than many traditional turfgrass lawns. *It is important to remember though that in the beginning, this grass WILL require regular watering to get established!*

Water your new plugs immediately after planting, soaking each plug thoroughly. This first irrigation is most effective when done by hand, since water can be directed right on top of each plug, where needed most. Large areas can be irrigated right away with a sprinkler system, but sprinklers must be run long enough to insure that plugs are wetted adequately (visual inspection a good idea). Keep planted area wet for the first two weeks, then slowly reduce watering, but keep the ground moist and take care not to let the plugs dry out.

While establishing 'UC Verde' Buffalograss, the amount and frequency of irrigation really depends upon several environmental and soil characteristics. It is important to remember the following:

- Supplemental irrigation may be needed even during rainy periods.
- The need for irrigation increases with increasing temperature.
- Windy conditions may also require more irrigation.
- Poorly drained clay-type soils will require less watering than sandy soils in the long run, but during early lawn establishment, watch for water stress in both types of soils.

REMEMBER that the plug soil will dry out faster than your garden soil, until the roots from the plugs have moved into the garden soil. To get an idea of whether your irrigation is correct in the first week or two, you can visually inspect and even pull up a few plugs following your irrigation cycle and make sure that they are fully wet.

Irrigation frequency will depend upon soil type, weather, and even the type of irrigation system. For the first 4 weeks or so, it will be necessary to water the lawn often, but with minimal volume since plugs have not rooted out. After the first four weeks, plugs should be filling in ('UC Verde' spreads by above-ground stolons or runners). At this time, irrigation cycle should be less frequent, but longer in duration; longer watering sessions encourage roots to go deeper, which is very desirable in terms of water savings.

In general, it will be difficult to cause problems with over-irrigating the 'UC Verde' plugs during establishment period. Make sure to water often enough in this time to prevent stress.

'UC Verde' Buffalograss is under stress when the grass blades wilt or the tips turn a *purplish-brown color*, such symptoms mean more watering is required. It does no harm to dig up several plugs and look at the soil moisture; then replant.

Remember: 'UC Verde' will be very water saving over time, but needs water in the beginning to get established, like all newly planted material.

Fertilization

After installation is complete, saturate each plug with a general purpose fertilizer: there are many to choose from including Miracle Grow®, and Gro-Power® (an organic fertilizer) OR fertilize the area with a sod/seed starter fertilizer. All of these are available at your local garden center. Read and follow the directions on the label for proper rates and application.

For decent soils, 'UC Verde' will do fine with one to two fertilizations annually; in poor soils, a third application may be done in mid-summer and a fourth application can be applied in early fall. In general, 'UC Verde' Buffalograss will do fine with 1 to 3 lbs. of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, annually, which is much less than the traditional turfgrasses that dominate our landscape.

Weed Control

Without Herbicides:

If you wish to avoid the use of chemicals, hand eradication of weeds and mowing at 1 - 1 1/2 inches during establishment will benefit your new planting. When using this method, your establishing buffalograss plugs will still benefit from fertilizer applications.

With an Organic, Non-Toxic Herbicide:

Corn gluten meal products are a promising alternative to traditional chemical herbicides. These work as a pre-emergent or weed suppressor, and has such only have an effect on germinating weed seeds, not emerged, established weeds. Studies have shown that weed-control with an initial application may be only 60%, but that subsequent applications can give pre-emergent control of up to 80%. Some of these products include A-Maize®, Concern®, and Espoma Organic Weed Preventer®; contact your garden center for these products.

With Herbicides:

Immediately after planting, apply a fertilizer with pre-emergent weed control. There are numerous products available at your local garden center, including: Scott's Halts Crabgrass Preventer® or Turfbuilder with Halts®. Follow label recommendations.

For emerged, established broadleaf weeds, there are a number of "Ready to Spray" products available; most of these may be applied at any temperature, and will not harm 'UC Verde' Buffalograss. Follow label instructions.

Mowing

Mowing is important during the establishment period to encourage the buffalograss to spread and to control weed growth. Mow the area at 1 1/2 to 3 inches as frequently as necessary to control weed growth. For long term management, 'UC Verde' Buffalograss may be mowed at heights of 3/4" to 2", typically, or left un-mowed for a very natural short meadow look...left un-mowed, your grass will reach a height of 3 to 6 inches. An un-mowed lawn will benefit from an annual mowing in either late fall or early spring; mow to 1-1/2 to 2" at this time...lawn may yellow for a short period if cut back more than a third at one mowing, but will green up quickly if early spring mowing.

Winter Dormancy

'UC Verde' buffalograss is a warm season turfgrass, and will naturally slow down in growth during winter. Depending upon location (coastal vs. inland), grass color will begin to change about December 1st from green to a straw-green color; the colder the nights the more straw coloring. 'UC Verde' does not go blonde-dormant, and comes out of dormancy about 4 weeks earlier than Bermuda grass.

DO NOT WORRY about dormancy! While this is the natural rest cycle for this grass, you do have options that will even allow for a green lawn year-round, as noted on the following page:

- 1) Accept the fact that this is the normal cycle for a warm season grass; look upon this dormancy as it is in much of the rest of the country: a natural a change of seasons (and a chance to take a break from lawn maintenance and save water!).
- 2) Reduce the dormancy period by mowing to 1" height mid-November and feeding with a balanced, slow-release fertilizer. Follow up in early February, with an application of a high nitrogen lawn fertilizer. Always apply fertilizers to well-watered lawns and water-in thoroughly immediately after application.
- 3) Over-seed with annual rye-grass where summer weather gets hot (inland areas), a native grass for the cooler, coastal areas. This over-seeding should be done in November for quick winter color; these grasses will naturally die down in early spring, when 'UC Verde' overtakes it. NOTE: Ryegrass is not recommended for over-seeding unless in areas where summer temperatures regularly exceed 85 - 90F.

4) Over-seed with California native wild-flowers in November, for green foliage color in winter followed by beautiful wild-flowers in early spring throughout the 'UC Verde' lawn.

5) Apply a turf-colorant in late November / early December. The colorant will last about 3 months, and will actually help bring the 'UC Verde' into new growth faster. There are some very good organic turf colorants on the market that are very close in color to 'UC Verde' at proper dilutions.

For further specifics on turf colorant recommendations and over-seeding plant selections, contact our office.

For any questions, further information regarding the management and care of 'UC Verde' buffalograss, or to order additional plugs, please call or e-mail us as shown below:

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