

## St. Augustine Grass

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St. Augustine grass is a popular warm-season grass that is commonly used for lawns in our area. Unfortunately, the volatility of our West Texas weather has taken a toll on the St. Augustine grass in this area. This year while the other grasses in my yard are lush, my St. Augustine grass is not exactly dead but it certainly is more brown than green.

There are several reasons why the St. Augustine grass may not have grown back this year.

1. Winterkill: St. Augustine grass is a warm-season grass that can be damaged by cold temperatures. If your area experienced an unusually cold winter, it's possible that your St. Augustine grass may have suffered winterkill, which occurs when the grass is unable to tolerate the freezing temperatures and dies.

2. Disease: St. Augustine grass is susceptible to several diseases, including brown patch, gray leaf spot, and take-all root rot. If your grass was infected with a disease, it may have died and not grown back the following year.

3. Insect infestation: St. Augustine grass is also vulnerable to insect infestations, such as chinch bugs, sod webworms, and armyworms. If your grass was infested with insects, they may have damaged or killed the grass, preventing it from growing back.

4. Soil compaction: If the soil in your yard is compacted, it can prevent the roots of your St. Augustine grass from growing and developing properly, leading to poor growth or death.

5. Poor maintenance: St. Augustine grass requires regular maintenance, including watering, fertilizing, and mowing. If your grass was not properly maintained, it may have died or struggled to grow back.

I think that the most likely culprit in our area is Winterkill. The winter of 2021 was cold but it was very wet. The moisture provided some insulation for the roots of the grass. The summer of 2022 was abnormally hot and dry. Then on December 22, 23 and 24<sup>th</sup> the temperatures were below 20 degrees with no precipitation. These conditions likely just freeze dried our grass.

There are several steps we can take to help the grass recover:

1. Wait for warmer weather: St. Augustine grass is a warm-season grass, and it may not begin growing until the soil temperatures reach at least 60 degrees Fahrenheit. We have had a cooler than normal Spring. But the weather does seem to be consistently warmer with our nighttime temperatures staying above 60 degrees lately. But remember just a few weeks ago we still had nighttime temperatures in the 40s. The soil temperature has to warm up before attempting to revive the grass.

2. Remove any debris: If your grass was damaged by cold temperatures, there may be debris, such as dead leaves and branches, covering it. Remove any debris to allow sunlight and air to reach the grass.

3. Water regularly: Water your grass regularly to help it recover. St. Augustine grass requires about 1 inch of water per week during the growing season. However, make sure that you are complying with your municipality's water restrictions if any are in place.

4. Fertilize: Apply a fertilizer specifically formulated for St. Augustine grass. Local nurseries will be able to advise you on the best fertilizers for our area.

5. Mow at the appropriate height: Mow your grass at the appropriate height to encourage healthy growth. For St. Augustine grass, the recommended mowing height is 2.5 to 4 inches. Mowing too short can damage the grass and inhibit root growth.

6. Treat for disease and pests: If your grass was damaged by cold temperatures, it may be more susceptible to disease and pests. Monitor your grass for signs of disease or pest infestation and treat as necessary.

7. Overseed: If there are areas of your lawn where the St. Augustine grass did not recover, you may need to overseed with a compatible grass species. Consult with a lawn care professional or a local horticulturist to determine the best grass species to use for overseeding.

Remember, recovery from cold damage may take time. Be patient and continue to provide proper care to your St. Augustine grass to encourage healthy growth. With proper care, your grass should recover and thrive.

BCMGA will offer several free education programs in May. There will be a program on Rainwater Harvesting at 10:00 on May 12 at the Abilene Public Library Main Location. We will also have the BCMGA Saturday Seminar from 9:00-12:00 on May 27 in the Taylor County Extension Office Conference Room, and the topic is Pests in the Garden.

If you have any questions, call the Taylor County Extension Office at 325-672-6048 or email us at [mgardeners@yahoo.com](mailto:mgardeners@yahoo.com). We hope you will like us on Facebook and visit [bcmgtx.org](http://bcmgtx.org) for all Big Country Master Gardener information and events. We are here to help you!