

Is Meyer Zoysia for Iowa?

Meyer Zoysia is a warm-season grass. The lawn grasses commonly used and recommended in Iowa are cool-season grasses. The final answer, however, depends upon what you want in a lawn grass as to care, appearance, etc.

by H. L. Lantz

MEYER ZOYSIA is being widely advertised for use as a lawn grass. Many questions about it have come to Iowa State College and the county extension offices. The most frequently asked questions are variations of: "Is Meyer Zoysia recommended for Iowa?" "Can it be used successfully as a lawn grass here?"

The key to the answers lies mainly in the fact that Meyer Zoysia is a warm-season grass. It does well in the area to the south of Iowa—from the 40° latitude southward. Meyer Zoysia is a selection from common Zoysia japonica and has been released for a special area which doesn't include Iowa. But many of the advertised claims for this grass are based on results obtained in the area for which it was developed.

In general, the evidence we have indicates no particular advantage for Meyer Zoysia in Iowa and that it probably will do no better than, if as well as, grasses already adapted and recommended for the state. It may, on the other hand, have some disadvantages in most of Iowa—depending on what you want in a lawn grass with regard to care, appearance, etc.

What It Is . . .

"Zoysia was introduced into the United States from Japan in 1905. Subsequent research by the United States Golf Association,

the USDA and state experiment stations developed several superior strains. Meyer (then known as Z-52) was selected for further tests in 1940. It was released jointly by USDA and the United States Golf Association in 1951.

Essentially, Zoysia is a warm-season grass, while bluegrass, bentgrass, fescue and other grasses commonly used in Iowa are cool-season grasses. Zoysia makes most of its growth during the summer months, while the cool-season grasses tend to make more growth during the spring and fall. So what? Let's see.

Will Zoysia grow in Iowa? Yes, though it's recognized as a slow grower in climates similar to Iowa's. Properly planted and cared for, it can also "survive" in Iowa, but a good lawn grass must do more than simply survive.

Does it stay green all year? No, it does not stay green all year. In fact, it doesn't "green up" as soon as bluegrass in the spring or stay green as late in the fall as bluegrass. From late September or early October through late April or early May in Iowa, the color of Meyer Zoysia is not green. The leaves are dead during the winter months. The color verges on that of straw or pale brown.

Zoysia starts losing its "greenness" with the first light frost. The first killing frost stops growth entirely; it won't green up again during any warm spells following the first frosts as does bluegrass. In central Iowa Zoysia hasn't

greened up again until warm weather in May.

In our test plots at Ames, Zoysia has frosted off with the first frost of the season. And it hasn't greened up until really warm weather begins. Adjacent bluegrass plots began to green up the third week in March. (In 1956, the Zoysia didn't green up until about June. In the 4 years it has been observed, Zoysia has generally greened up during the latter part of May.)

So while bluegrass may remain green into November or later, Zoysia can be expected to remain green only until the first frosts of late September or early October. Likewise, bluegrass usually starts greening up in March, while Zoysia couldn't be expected to do so until May 15 to 30 depending, of course, on the season.

For more accurate estimates of these dates for your particular location, see the two maps to determine the average dates for the first frost of fall and the last frost of spring.

Will Meyer Zoysia form a thick, dense sod? Yes—eventually and if properly planted, fertilized and cared for. Using the usually recommended method of planting (2- to 2½-inch sprigs or plugs planted about 1 foot apart), evidence indicates that 2 to 5 years are required for Meyer Zoysia to make a solid sod in central Iowa. If watering can be done and if plenty of nitrogen is provided, Zoysia might make a full

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