



Lawn Renovation

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Last February, Loren his family moved into a house in Honolulu with a very large back yard. Most of it is comprised of several different kinds of lawn grasses. He has identified three types of zoysiagrass, 'El Toro', 'Emerald', and templegrass, along with bermudagrass and some other grassy weeds including Hilograss and nutgrass. There is also the usual collection of broadleaf weeds. Most of the lawn gets sun all day except under two medium-size trees, where the Emerald zoysia and Hilograss do well. Loren does not want to replace the entire yard but would like to work with what is there to eventually have a nice looking weed free lawn.

In cases like Loren's, where total lawn replacement is not practical, the best option is to put effort into eliminating the weeds and let the desirable lawn grasses co-exist. In this case, the three zoysias and the bermudagrass mix will blend reasonably well. This will also be an advantage in the shadier areas, where the zoysia will perform better than bermudagrass. It is very important to maintain a regular and timely mowing schedule and to select the most desirable height of cut. With this particular mix of grasses, a mowing height of about 1 inch or a little higher will probably work best. That will be the lowest or next-to-lowest height setting on most rotary mowers. The growth rate will be slower during the winter months, but regular mowing to remove not more than one-third of the blades is always recommended.

A careful spraying program of selective herbicides and fertilization can gradually control the weed problem and allow the grasses to cover. Begin with an application of

turf fertilizer, preferably one with slow-release nitrogen, at a rate of 1 pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet of lawn. This will help to get the grass healthy and more able to withstand the following herbicide treatments, and at the same time, the rapidly growing weeds will be more susceptible. Begin the herbicide program when the lawn responds to the fertilizer. Several different herbicides will be necessary to control all of the weeds and at the same time not injure the lawn grasses.

There are three basic types of selective herbicides, those that kill only broadleaf plants, those that kill only sedges (nutgrass, McCoy grass, and kylinga are the most common) and those that kill only grasses.

Many broadleaf herbicides are available in garden shops. Ortho® make a variety of Weed B Gon products. Another readily available product is Trimec® Southern, which controls a wide variety of broadleaf weeds. Read the label to choose the right product for your type of lawn and the weeds you want to target.

Nutgrass and other sedge-type weeds can be controlled with a product called Image® or another called Sedge-Hammer®. Both are safe to apply to most turfgrasses.

A selective crabgrass-type herbicide can be used to keep Hilograss and other wide-bladed grasses under control. These products contain an active ingredient called MSMA and are safe to apply to zoysia and bermudagrass lawns. The most commonly available product is Monterey Weed-Hoe. A product called Trimec® Plus also contains MSMA and is effective in controlling both broadleaf and grassy weeds.

For very hard-to-control weeds, a direct application of Roundup® is sometimes the only effective method. In lawn areas, where spot spraying will kill too much grass around the treated area, a narrow watercolor paintbrush can be used to apply a small amount of concentrated Roundup (diluted 1 part herbicide to 9 parts water)

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directly onto a portion of the weed. Mix in a green turf dye to better visualize and ensure good coverage. This can be tedious work, but eventually it will eliminate the more troublesome spreading-type woody weeds, such as sleeping grass.

Lawn renovations such as this should be approached as long-term projects. Constant evaluation leading to possible changes in direction may be necessary as the individual grasses blend together and the weeds are brought under control.

See also . . .

Before you buy or apply an herbicide

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/WC-3.pdf>

Bermudagrass

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/TM-5.pdf>

Chemical weed control options for turfgrasses in Hawaii

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/TM-15.pdf>

Purple nutsedge control in turf and ornamentals

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/L-9.pdf>

Zoysiagrass

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/TM-8.pdf>

Mention of trade names is not a recommendation in preference to other products that may also be suitable. Use pesticides only in accordance with the limitations and instructions on the label.