

Description

Sapphire St. Augustine, a variety developed by Australian turfgrass breeder, Todd Layt of Ozbreed Pty. Ltd., and introduced into the United States by Sod Solutions, Inc., thrives under a wide range of climatic and soil conditions in USDA Zones 8b to 11, which stretches from Florida northward to the Coastal Carolinas and westward along the Gulf Coast Region into Central Texas and continues into southwestern Arizona and coastal and central California. Sapphire is an ideal choice for residential and commercial use. Sapphire has an outstanding blue green color. Sapphire also has a massive root system, making it drought tolerant once established. Sapphire St. Augustine recovers quickly from damage by wear or minor scalping, because it sends out runners to repair open areas more rapidly than other St. Augustine varieties. Research at 21 sites throughout the southern United States, coordinated by Dr. Han at Auburn University, has also demonstrated this variety's disease resistance along with its high quality aesthetics.

Sapphire, like all other St. Augustine's, has routine installation and maintenance needs that must be properly addressed. The following information is not limited to Sapphire, but is applicable to most turfgrasses in the St. Augustine family.

Production and Quality Control

Genetic purity and preservation of the Sapphire St. Augustine variety is of primary importance to Sod Solutions. Only turfgrass producers licensed by Sod Solutions are authorized to grow Sapphire for sale. All licensed Sapphire production is monitored by Sod Solutions through ongoing quality control and quality assurance programs. Sod Solutions has developed the most comprehensive St. Augustine quality control system in the country.

Best Management Practices

To ensure optimum quality and performance of Sapphire, users must implement proper care and maintenance. This care and maintenance has been formalized below in the Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Sapphire St. Augustine. These BMPs are written as a guide and should be modified as local climate, soil, and environmental conditions dictate. It is important to note that no "magic fertilizer" or "super chemical" will solve all problems or make any turfgrass perfect. Through consistent application of the BMPs and on-going evaluation, education, and modification of these practices, however, users will greatly enhance the quality and performance of Sapphire St. Augustine. The described maintenance information also applies to many semi-dwarf St. Augustine grasses. It is recommended that users identify the specific variety of St. Augustine being utilized, and that information is gathered pertaining to maintenance for that cultivar.

Installation and Establishment

Installation and the care taken during the initial days that follow are the most critical factors in determining the long-term quality and performance of any turfgrass, including Sapphire St. Augustine. Harvesting and transplantation are extremely stressful to turfgrass and precautionary measures should be taken to help reduce further cultural and environmental stresses. Sapphire is a tough, hardy turfgrass that, once established, produces a beautiful lifetime lawn and landscape. **Proper care, including pre-installation soil preparation and limiting time on the pallet to less than 24-hours, yields positive results (see www.sodsolutions.com/installation/index.shtml). Improper care, especially during the initial 24-hour period after harvest, can cause death of the turfgrass or damage that results in lengthy recovery and additional expense. This potential damage is magnified during hot, humid months. An installation procedure that is acceptable during cool weather may cause extensive damage during hot weather for any St. Augustinegrass.**

Irrigating Newly Installed Sapphire: Proper watering upon installation is essential to successful establishment:

- Prior to installation, ensure irrigation systems are working properly and cover all areas to be planted
- Water thoroughly upon installation, ensuring that both the Sapphire is wet and the soil is moist to a depth of 3." **Wetting the soil to approximately 1" prior to installation is suggested**
- In hot weather, water immediately following installation to mitigate severe damage or loss due to heat/dehydration stress
- To promote root establishment, water as needed to keep the new turf from dehydrating
- Shaded areas and heavy soils require less water than full-sun areas and sandy soils
- Remember to avoid overwatering to the point of puddling or runoff
- Watering is most effective when done in the early morning hours. Nighttime waterings are not recommended
- During winter and cooler months keep turf hydrated, not continually saturated
- When proper rooting is evident, alter irrigation program accordingly (See Post Establishment Irrigation on page 2)
- Visit www.sodsolutions.com/research/research_water.shtml for more information on proper irrigation

Mowing: New installations are often uneven, and care should be taken not to scalp high areas. A common mistake is **not** to mow a newly installed lawn, which slows establishment and encourages the turf to become "leggy".

- Mow within 7-10 days of installation and bag clippings for the first few mowings. Mowing and bagging encourages root growth, removes debris from installation and encourages new top growth
- See Post Establishment Mowing on page 2 for more information

Insecticides: Newly installed turfgrass can be susceptible to insect damage, especially armyworms and webworms. New grass is more vulnerable than established turf due to the temporary loss of a deep root structure. Armyworms and webworms prefer new grass compared to established turf due to the "tenderness" of new growth.

- **For any insecticide application, always read and follow label directions carefully**
- Apply a broad-spectrum preventative insecticide to protect the turfgrass through the establishment particularly during the active cycle of the insects

Fungicides: During stressful times of the year, i.e., extremely wet and/or hot periods, a preventative fungicide should be applied at the time of installation.

- **For any fungicide application, always read and follow label directions carefully**
- Longer-residual products such as Heritage and Compass are preferred; however, a number of other products can be used during the establishment period, such as Subdue MAXX, Banner MAXX and ProStar

Fertility: Use a transplant-friendly regimen that will help reduce shock and minimize disease:

- Use a starter fertilizer that is low in Nitrogen and higher in Phosphorus and Potassium. Incorporate at 3" if possible.
- Recommended fertilizers include balanced, time release products, such as 10-10-10.
- The use of a high Nitrogen fertilizer on a new lawn can cause permanent damage

Post-Establishment

Mowing: Mowing is a critical and often underappreciated cultural practice:

- Maintain Sapphire at 2"
- Mow every 7-10 days during the active growing season
- Mow as needed during all other periods
- Never cut more than 1/3 of the total length of the blade at any one mowing
- If a mowing is missed and clippings clump on top of the Sapphire, bag or vacuum clippings to reduce shade-out



Insecticides: Avoid stress from insects by performing insecticidal applications as needed:

- **For any insecticide application, always read and follow label directions carefully**
- Early identification and treatment of insect stress minimizes inputs and injury
- Make routine observations of the landscape, and be aware of seasonal pests like chinch bugs, webworms, armyworms, and grubs
- Control armyworms and webworms with Sevin, Orthene, Diazinon, or Pyrethroid-based products
- Control chinch bugs with Talstar
- Control grubs with Bayer Advanced Lawn® Season-Long Grub Control Ready-to-Spread Granules annually in the late spring
- Remember: Read labels for compliance

Herbicides: Proper mowing, irrigation and fertilization of Sapphire will reduce weed problems. If a weed problem persists:

- **For any herbicide application, always read and follow directions carefully**
- **Improper use of herbicides can severely damage or kill Sapphire**
- Make routine observations of the landscape being aware of seasonal weeds
- Identify the type of weed causing the problem before using any chemical controls
- Consult with local experts and view www.sodsolutions.com/problem_solving/index.shtml for herbicide applications

Fungicides: Although Sapphire exhibits good disease resistance, fungal problems can occur during prolonged periods of adverse environmental conditions.

- **For any fungicide application, always read and follow label directions carefully**
- Early identification and treatment of disease stress minimizes inputs and injury
- Make routine observations of the landscape, being aware of unusual symptoms
- Consider a broad-spectrum fungicide application if predictable seasonal problems are noted
- Consult with local experts and view www.sodsolutions.com/problem_solving/index.shtml for fungicide recommendations

Irrigation: Once established, Sapphire requires water on an as-needed basis. Overwatering encourages excessive growth, disease, root rot, and poor aeration of soils. Most lawns are overwatered, not underwatered, which wastes resources, creates a shallow-rooted "water dependent" lawn, and potentially damages the turf.

- Watering requirements are greatly dependent on soil type, season, geography and other factors
- Ensure irrigation systems are working properly and covering all areas covered by Sapphire
- Make routine observations of the landscape and learn the signs (i.e., wilting) that indicate when irrigation is required
- Shaded areas and heavy soils require less water than full-sun areas and sandy soils
- Encourage deep root growth by watering until the soil is moist to a depth of 3", shallow watering encourages shallow roots
- Infrequent deep watering maximizes drought resistance and tolerance
- During drought conditions, irrigation needs are generally 1" of water per week
- Visit www.sodsolutions.com/research/research_water.shtml for more information on proper irrigation

Fertility: Proper fertility practices will encourage healthy, disease and insect-free Sapphire

- Perform a soil test to understand your soil type(s) and condition and best determine your specific fertility needs
- Generally Sapphire requires 3-4 fertilizer applications/year: spring (1 early, 1 late), summer, and fall
- Make routine observations and fertilize according to what the landscape indicates
- Understand what and how much fertilizer you are applying
- Avoid disease and insect inducing growth flushes by reducing Nitrogen rates
- Improve color and limit growth surges, especially in summer, by utilizing Iron sources
- Higher Nitrogen rates should only be applied in the spring, for injury recovery, or for planned "peaking" of Sapphire
- Apply balanced, slow-release fertilizers with lower rates of Nitrogen in the summer and fall
- Recommended fertilizers are balanced, time release fertilizers, such as a 16-04-08, for most uses. Can use products with more iron to improve color. Consult with your local retailer, landscape professional or county extension office for specific recommendations. Perform a soil analysis for best results. (visit www.sodsolutions.com for additional general information)