

Here at **Red Hen Turf Farm**, we strive to make **Do-It-Yourself Lawn Care Do-able**. We hope you find this guide and our website helpful, and remember, if you EVER have any questions or concerns, give us a call. We're here to help!

Last Update: 02/01/2025

Tips for Grass in Shade

There is no grass that likes shade. Some ornamental plants like hostas or impatiens require shade to look their best, and some grass species are more shade-tolerant than others, *but there is no grass that likes shade!*

There are two problems with grass in shade: lack of sunshine and reduced air movement.

When there is a lack of sunshine at night, dew settles on the grass and may not dry off the shaded grass until well into the afternoon of the next day.

Foliar (leaf) grass diseases thrive in conditions where free water spreads and there is long period of time when the dew remains on the grass leaves. Grass plants are simply weaker and have more disease pressure when grown in shade.

The result is that grass growing in shade is less dense, shallow rooted, vulnerable to disease, and has very poor wear tolerance — exactly what you don't want if you have dogs or kids that play under the shade trees!

A lawn located on an open corner lot, or on a bluff on a lake that has oak trees with high branches can look quite good, while a lawn surrounded by pine trees with low branches that block air movement is bound to look bad.

High branch trees do let some light filter through, while dense low branch trees block light and also stop air from moving.

Growing grass under maple trees is particularly difficult for these reasons, as well as the fact that maples have numerous shallow roots that compete with the grass.

Good Management is Critical

Grass has a better chance of surviving in shade if it is well managed. We recommend planting the best shade tolerant seed you can find.

Watering. Grass in shade needs much less water than grass in sun. If a zone of your sprinkler system waters both sunny and shady areas, block the heads, install smaller nozzles, or do other things to make sure you do not overwater the grass in shade. Check the soil, and only water in shade when the soil is dry in the top 3 inches.

Fertilizing. Grass in shade needs much less fertilizer than grass in sun. Fertilize the grass in shade with a rate that is about 3/4 the rate you use in sunny areas. You don't want to over stimulate the grass or starve it.

Mowing and Traffic. Mow carefully in shade. Don't skid the tires when you turn. Also, the recommended cutting height for most grass growing in the shade is 3 - 4 inches. This is slightly higher than the recommended 2-1/2 - 3-1/2 height of grass grown in full sun. If your lawn has shady and sunny areas, you might set the mower to 3 - 3-1/2 inches to accommodate both. Limit the amount of traffic on heavily shaded grass because it is slow to recover from physical damage. The 3 - 4 inch mowing height also helps protect the grass in shade by leaving more leaf tissue, which reduces the damage caused by traffic.

Lime. Whether your grass is in the shade or sun, never add lime without first taking a soil test and having it analyzed by a lab. If you use our Soil Testing Procedures, we will translate the results into layman's terms and make recommendations for fertilizing your lawn based on your soil's nutritional needs. Find out more by giving us a call or visiting our website.

SHOP LOCATION: 29435 Darden Rd, New Carlisle, IN 46552

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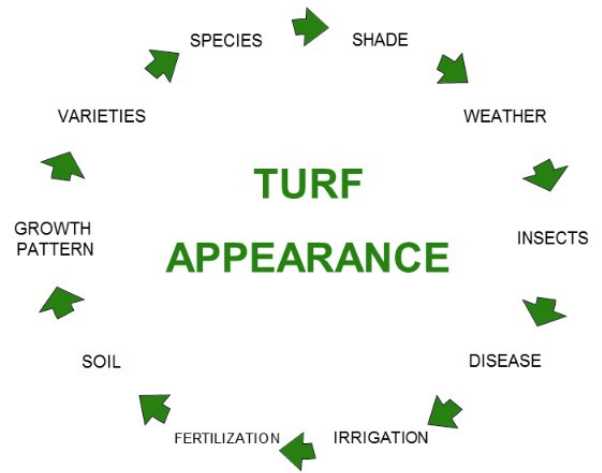
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Things to Try

Do what you can to let in more light and improve the air flow so the dew dries sooner. For example:

- Trim some lower branches.
- Remove ugly, over grown shrubs.
- Look critically at your trees. Maybe some are damaged and can be removed.
- Plant the right grass seed. There are big differences in the shade tolerance of species and varieties. Kentucky bluegrass, as a species, has less shade tolerance than fine fescues. Bluegrass sod won't survive very long in heavy shade, and we do not recommend bluegrass sod in shade unless there is at least 4 hours of sunlight per day.
- **Don't** buy cheap seed for shade. There are millions of combinations of grass mixes, and buying the more costly one is simpler than spending hours studying different mixes.
- While fall is the best time to plant grass in sun, most experts think before tree leaves emerge in early spring is a better time to plant grass in shade.



Know When You're Beat

Give it up, especially around maple trees. Shallow-rooted maple trees are just about a hopeless case.

Consider other landscaping options like shade-loving ornamentals, or putting bark mulch a few feet around the tree.

Success?

Just when you think you have growing grass in shade all figured out, it can suddenly die one year. What might have happened?

The culprit might be a prolonged period of high nighttime temperatures and high humidity, which is hard on grass in sun and can wipe out grass in shade. Also, because trees keep growing every year, if the lower branches are not trimmed, they gradually take up more sun and block more air until the grass can't survive.

Mother nature is funny like that.

How to Become Rich Beyond Your Wildest Dreams

It's simple! Develop a shade loving grass that has good density, wear tolerance, and color and you will be richer than Bill Gates.

Mankind may want this from a grass, but Mother Nature says no.

Whether you're a homeowner, landscaper, contractor, or a garden center, give us a call for our current selection and prices.

Want to Learn More?

The Purdue Turfgrass Science Department has numerous free printable brochures that cover this topic, among so many others. We love this resource because it's based on scientific research and applies to our geographic area ... Much more reliable than Google Searching and hoping for the best.

Visit turf.purdue.edu/homeowner-resources