

Warm Season Grasses growing in Cool Season Lawns



By Mary Small, M.S., Diagnostician

CSU Extension/Jefferson County Plant Diagnostic Clinic

There are two types of grasses in Colorado: cool season and warm season. Cool season grasses grow best in the cooler times of the year (spring and fall) and struggle to grow during hot weather (summer). Warm season grasses stay dormant until warm weather, thrive in the hot summer months and go dormant after the first frost.

In Colorado, the most common cool season turfgrass is Kentucky bluegrass. Other cool season grasses that may be found in lawns include perennial ryegrass, fine fescue and tall fescue. Warm season grasses include buffalograss, blue grama, Bermudagrass and bentgrass. When found in lawns, they are usually considered to be weeds.

It's not unusual for callers to ask why most of the (cool season) lawn has greened up, but some patches have not. One of the most common explanations is that there is a warm season grass growing in the lawn. It will not green up until soil temperatures warm sufficiently.

The warm season grass can be left in place where it will eventually green up and blend in with the rest. It can also be dug out or killed with herbicide such as glyphosate (RoundUp) and the area over seeded with cool season grasses. Wait to treat with a herbicide until the plants green up and are actively growing.