

Better Pastures for the Tropics and Subtropics

Kikuyu grass (*Pennisetum clandestinum*)



- dense creeping grass
- suited to high fertility soils
- for subtropical or tablelands
- seeding varieties.

Pennisetum clandestinum Hochst. ex Chiov. -

1 habit of basal plant part; 2 ligule; 3 inflorescence; 4 spikelet.

Kikuyu grass is a low growing, deep-rooted perennial with stolons and rhizomes, and forms a dense turf very resistant to heavy grazing. The flowering stems are very short, and are practically enclosed by the leaves. Seed is difficult to harvest.

Kikuyu is grown from Tasmania to the Atherton Tableland in Queensland, on deep lighter textured soils. It usually needs more than 900 mm of annual rainfall unless planted in areas which receive additional run-off water, and demands high fertility, responding well to fertiliser.

Nitrogen supply will controls the proportion of kikuyu in a sward; mat grass dominance can be turned to kikuyu-dominance by the application of nitrogen fertiliser.

Kikuyu is cold-tolerant, and can make good autumn growth with adequate nitrogen. Kikuyu used to be planted from cuttings, in either early spring or late summer, but is now usually sown from seed. New plantings of kikuyu are highly palatable and nutritious, but the tight sward locks up nutrients, leading to nitrogen run-down.

Pastures can be renovated to restore productivity, or a legume can be incorporated. However, it can be difficult to maintain a good legume-grass balance even with [white clover](#), unless the pasture is renovated in autumn and superphosphate applied.

Whittet is a taller variety which makes seed harvesting easier. It has broader leaves, thicker stems, and larger internodes on the stolons, and it persists better under lower fertility.

Crofts is a taller variety with more upright, narrower leaves than Whittet, and more cold tolerant. Although it is susceptible to the kikuyu yellows, the disease is not prevalent in the cool climates where Crofts is superior.

Breakwell has fine, narrow leaves and more prostrate runners, so forming a dense sward. Although it seeds freely, seed is rarely available now.

Noonan is very similar to Whittet and Breakwell (its parents), but is recommended for its high field tolerance to kikuyu yellows, a disease caused by a Phycomycete.

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Date created: 14 April 1998 Revised: 15 January 2003

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Kikuyu Grass

This male sterile variety of Kikuyu is vigorous in growth and tolerant of heavy traffic and drought conditions



This creeping perennial has stolons and rhizomes with above and below ground runners. It is a vigorous, light green grass with flattened culms and takes root from its lower nodes. Kikuyu has a high wearability especially when grown in full sun and good ability to recuperate. It has a high thatching tendency and is quick to establish.

Kikuyu originated in the East African highlands. Its common name was derived in 1903 from the Kikuyu people of Kenya, who traditionally lived east of the Aberdare Mountains, where the grass thrives. Kikuyu was introduced to Australia by seed in 1919 and then propagated vegetatively for more than 50 years.

Kikuyu does not particularly like saline soils, but grows well on any well-drained fertile soil. It has a wide adaptability but does prefer moist, medium textured soils. Kikuyu is usually intolerant of shade. This variety has high cold and frost tolerance and a strong resistance to disease and weeds.

Kikuyu will hold colour well in most conditions. It makes an especially good lawn on large areas and is one of the most economical turfs. Commonly used domestically and commercially.

Extremely pet tolerant.

The recommendations overleaf are for established lawns only, to ensure good health and the best possible colour year round. These recommendations are averages and should be used as a guide. Situations vary according to soil conditions, location, water pressure etc. The visual appearance of your lawn will become your best guide.

Drought Tolerance	9/10
Wear and Durability	10/10
Shade Tolerance	4/10
Low Maintenance	8/10

All fertiliser and turf care products can be purchased at Hicks Instant Turf outlets and are available for home delivery.



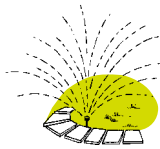
Kikuyu Grass



No more than 30-40% of the leaf should be removed in any one mow. Keep mower blades sharp and do not cut wet grass. Mowing height is an important factor in promoting healthy lawn. Kikuyu is best kept between 30-40mm throughout the year.

Annual scarifying is necessary, best carried out between October and December.

In summer, mow every 7-10 days. During autumn and winter, every 2-5 weeks, only if necessary. A regular rotary mower can be used.



Save time and money on your water bill by installing a controlled sprinkler system.

Kikuyu can tolerate severe drought conditions once established.

Watering to maintain a healthy green appearance:

- summer - over 30 degrees 3 times per week for 15 minutes
- autumn and spring 1 time per week for 20 minutes
- winter - when no rain 1 time per week for 12 minutes



Apply four applications of fertilizer a year from our specialty range. Reduced growth, paleness of colour and weeds may indicate your lawn is lacking nutrition. Ask for a copy of our Kikuyu fertilising program.



For best results with weedicides, promote growth by fertilising 14 days ahead and do not mow for 48 hours prior to spraying. Broadleaf sprays control Clover, Bindii and Broadleaf weeds including Paterson's Curse (Salvation Jane) and should be applied before flowering at the end of July as a preventative.

To control Black Beetle, Mole Cricket and grass-eating caterpillars in lawns, use a recognised Lawn Grub Killer each spring, as a preventative.

Wintergrass control – apply annually between April and August.

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