

# Right Plant Right Place

Choosing plants is a fun part of landscaping. Before you plant, consider several factors. Placing the right plant in the right place grows healthier plants and minimizes problems.

## Match Plants to the Site

You Will Need:

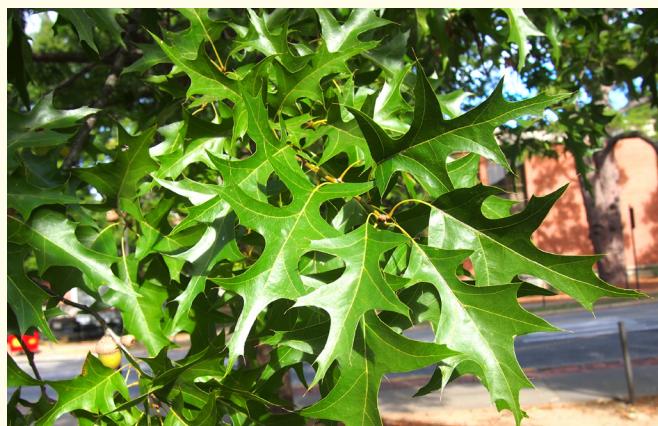
Research  
Site Observations  
Local Plants

Shovel  
Water Hose  
Mulch

- **Consider soil type.** Drought-tolerant plants thrive on elevated dry spots. Still, they may succumb to root diseases when planted in low, wet areas. Plants adapted to wet soils often need areas with poor drainage. Learn what the plant needs.
- **Select and position trees** for maximum shading. Plant deciduous shade trees on your house's south, east, or west sides. These trees will cast shade in the summer and let in warming light during winter. Positioning trees and shrubs strategically can improve your home's heating and cooling capacity.
- **Group plants** by their growth requirements. Combine plants according to their water, sunlight, fertilizer, and maintenance needs. Reduce maintenance and conserve water.
- **Shop locally.** Alabama's climate supports countless varieties of plants, many of which are grown by local nurseries.
- **Properly space** landscape plants and accommodate for growth as they mature.



Florida dogwood (*Cornus florida*) is a native understory tree that blooms in spring. Its fruits and flowers support a variety of wildlife. It grows best under afternoon shade.



Nuttall oak (*Quercus texana*) is planted to create shade. It is drought tolerant once established, has a medium to fast growth rate, and displays showy fall color. Oaks support a variety of wildlife.

# Right Plant Right Place

**Native plants occur naturally in regions, states, ecosystems, and habitats without direct or indirect human interaction. Some Alabama native plants are widely available. Others become more available as demand increases.**

## Native Plants

*You Will Need:*

Research  
Site Observations  
Local Plants

Shovel  
Water Hose  
Mulch

- **Native does not mean sacrifice.** Some of our most beautiful landscaping plants are natives.
  - Native plants serve as valuable resources for pollen, nectar, and forage for pollinators and other beneficial insects. Some beneficial insects help reduce pests in your vegetable garden and yard.
  - Native plants support native wildlife.
- **Avoid planting invasive species.** These non-native species crowd out native plants and can seriously threaten Alabama's ecosystems and wildlife.
  - If invasive species are already present in your yard, remove them. Examples of invasive species are privet, popcorn tree, and Chinese wisteria.
- **Visit parks, wildlife preserves, botanical gardens, and nurseries** to see native plants. Observing their growth habit and mature size helps you make smart choices.



Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) is a native small tree or shrub adapted to a variety of soil types. Fruiting varieties attract numerous wildlife species. The flowers support many native insects.

- **Visit libraries or bookstores**, especially those in botanical gardens, and web resources such as the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to find good reference information on Alabama native plants.
- **Plant natives in the right place.** Just because a plant is native does not guarantee its success if planted where it cannot thrive.

# Right Plant Right Place

Home lawns are often a focal point in the landscape. A healthy lawn is a functional space for many family activities. It also prevents soil erosion, cools temperatures on hot days, and absorbs airborne pollutants.

## Home Lawns

*You Will Need:*

Research  
Site Observations  
Family Plan

Water Hose  
Sprinkler (optional)  
Soil Test

- **Selecting turfgrass.** This may be the most essential factor in establishing and maintaining an attractive and lower-maintenance lawn. Five turfgrasses are recommended for Alabama home lawns: bermudagrass, centipedegrass, St. Augustinegrass, tall fescue, and zoysiagrass. Each differs in appearance and has different mowing and fertilizer needs.
- **Slopes.** Mowing grass on slopes is difficult, so avoid planting turf where it cannot be easily cut. Consider using other groundcovers on slopes.
- **Right plant, right place.** The turfgrass species adapted to Alabama do not tolerate long periods of wet soil. Three of these, St. Augustinegrass, zoysiagrass, and tall fescue, can tolerate growing under trees for a short time. All three will need replacing within a few years.
  - Fescue grows best in northern Alabama yards.
  - St. Augustine grows best in central to southern Alabama yards.
- **Design your lawn** to be functional. Avoid treating it as a space filler. Consider and plan how you will use it.
- **Water a new lawn daily** for the first 7 to 10 days (more than once daily might be needed during hot weather), and then 1 to 3 times a week for the next month.
  - To stay green and avoid summer dormancy, a well-established lawn might only need supplemental water once or twice per month.
  - Allowing summer dormancy in southern lawns saves water.
- **Fertilize appropriately.** Fertilize only when the lawn needs it and never when it is dormant. Fertilizers containing nitrogen are **ONLY** useful when the lawn is green.



Whether your lawn is large or small, design its size for your family's activities.

# Smart Yards Recipe Series

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### Home Lawns

**Table 1. Characteristics of Turfgrasses Recommended for Use on Home Lawns in Alabama**

Condition	Turfgrasses				
	Bermudagrass	Centipedegrass	St. Augustinegrass	Tall Fescue	Zoysiagrass
Adaptation <sup>1</sup>	N,C,S	C,S	C,S	N	N,C,S
Drought Tolerance	Excellent	Good	Good	Fair	Excellent
Sunlight <sup>2</sup>	Full	Full to Partial	Full to Shade	Full to Shade	Full to Partial
Salt Tolerance	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good
Wear Tolerance	Excellent	Poor	Poor	Fair	Excellent
Soil pH	5.5 to 7.0	5.5 to 7.0	5.5 to 7.0	5.5 to 7.0	5.5 to 7.0
Establishment Methods	Sprigs, Plugs, Sod, Seed <sup>3</sup>	Sprigs, Plugs, Sod, Seed	Sprigs, Plugs, Sod	Seed, Sod	Sprigs, Plugs, Sod, Seed
Leaf Color	Medium to Dark	Light	Medium to Dark	Medium	Medium to Dark
Leaf Texture	Medium to Fine	Coarse to Medium	Coarse	Coarse to Medium	Coarse to Fine
Maintenance Level <sup>4</sup>	Medium to High	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Mowing Height	1 to 2 inches	1 to 2 inches	2½ to 4 inches	2 to 3½ inches	1 to 2 inches

<sup>1</sup>Adaptation: N = north; C = central; S = south

<sup>2</sup>Sunlight: Full = at least 8 hours of sunlight; Partial = at least 6 hours of sunlight; Shade = at least 4 hours of sunlight

<sup>3</sup>Common bermudagrass types only

<sup>4</sup>Maintenance level: Low = fewer than 2 fertilizations per year; Medium = 2 to 4 fertilizations per year; High = more than 4 fertilizations per year

