

Cottonwood Creek HOA

LAWN AND NATURAL GRASS MAINTENANCE

Prepared by HOA Beautification Committee. Submitted to and Approved by HOA Board of Directors (October 2020)

Each year at the Cottonwood Creek Annual HOA meeting, the discussion regarding the maintenance of the natural grasses in our neighborhood and the mowing of such is addressed. Starting in 2021, the HOA will no longer enlist a local farmer to cut and bale the natural grass in our neighborhood community.

In accordance with the Cottonwood Creek Covenants, this document serves as a reminder and reference of the lawn and natural grass maintenance requirements. Each individual lot owner is responsible for weed control and grass maintenance for their own lot.

Lawn Maintenance:

Our neighborhood covenants specify lawn mowing distances and maintenance, as well as natural grass areas in Article 1, Sections 15 and 16. Any reference to “Declarant” in the Declaration of Covenants, Easements and Restrictions has been updated to Home Owners Association Board since all lots have now been sold and the HOA Board now governs the covenants.

Section 15. No garden shall be grown upon that portion of any Lot nearer to the street than provided for minimum building setback lines; and no trees shrubs, hedges or other plants shall be maintained or permitted in such proximity to any Lot as will interfere with the use and maintenance of any street or walk or the unobstructed view at intersections sufficient for the safety of pedestrians and vehicles. Suitable ground cover, consisting of either sod or native grasses, shall be maintained on those portions of a Lot not formally landscaped and not located within the Natural Grass Restriction Area (as defined in Article I, Section 16 below) in such manner as to prevent erosion by wind or water. Lot owners may plant grass and/or lay sod up to the boundaries of any street or sidewalk or the boundaries of the Natural Grass Restriction Area, as applicable, provided that such grass or sod is and remains properly irrigated. Each Lot owner shall take whatever steps are necessary to control noxious weeds on such Lot.

Section 16. Each Lot owner shall be required to maintain and manage existing natural grass on that area of such Lot extending at least twenty-five (25) feet from each side Lot line and fifty (50) feet from the rear Lot line (the “Natural Grass Restriction Area”). Declarant encourages the boundary between the Natural Grass Restriction Area be varied. Lot owners may plant other native or prairie grasses in the Natural Grass Restriction Area with the prior written approval of the Declarant, which approval may be withheld in its sole and absolute discretion. If reseeded of the Natural Grass Restriction Area is required due to construction damage, replacement seed must be purchased from the Declarant. Mowing of the Natural Grass Restriction Area may not take place without the authorization of the Declarant, but shall take place at the request of the Declarant. Walking trails, no more than six (6) feet wide may be mowed

throughout the Natural Grass Restriction Area as long as no mowed area is within ten (10) feet of any Lot line. In no event shall a Lot owner allow more than two-thirds (2/3) of the total area of such Lot to be maintained, mowed and irrigated. All mowed areas shall be regularly mowed to a height of not more than eight (8) inches, unless otherwise approved in writing by Declarant, which approval may be withheld in its sole and absolute discretion. All mowed areas shall be irrigated to maintain appearance, except for walking trails in the Natural Grass Restriction Area.

Natural Grasses & Maintenance:

Brome

The grass the developer planted throughout the neighborhood is smooth brome. Smooth brome is not a prairie grass, it is a pasture grass. It is also not native to the United States, it came from Europe in the late 1800s. Smooth Brome is a sod-forming, cool season grass; and in that regard it is similar to your lawn grass. It grows best in cooler, wet weather, with April and May being its primary growing months; however, it does tolerate drought conditions well. Unlike lawn grass, however, smooth brome is a long stem grass and should never be cut shorter than four inches and does not recover well from any mowing. It needs a lot of nitrogen, so a good annual fertilization of nitrogen is beneficial. Smooth Brome is not very beneficial to wildlife. Some Cottonwood Creek residents have already successfully established natural grass areas for pollinators, which can be a struggle with all the smooth brome as the brome is very aggressive and makes establishment of native prairie grass difficult without completely killing off the brome first.

Advantages of a periodic mowing:

- Cuts down on weed growth.
- Helps prevent volunteer tree growth.
- Promotes the growth of the grasses with thicker and more dense stands of grass.
- Helps with insect and grasshopper control.

Advantages of not mowing:

- A clean, weed free area of tall brome grass is beautiful in the late summer and fall months.

Buffalo Grass

Buffalo grass is low maintenance and tough as a turf grass. The plant is a perennial native to the Great Plains. The plant has a history of being expensive and hard to establish, however planting buffalo grass from the newer cultivars have minimized these traits. It is the only native grass that is also useful as a lawn grass. Buffalo grass lawns are warm season turf which are drought tolerant with better cold resistance than other warm season grasses. The grass is quite tolerant to a range of conditions and establishes with seed, sod or plugs.

Care for buffalo grass is minimal and mowing is infrequent. It goes brown and dormant in the fall when cold temperatures arrive and wakes in spring when the air and soil warm up. Its busiest growing season is May and September. The plant forms a fine turf with bluish green color 8 to 10 inches high. Buffalo grass lawns are very adapted to low moisture areas.

Newer cultivars are resistant to weeds and require even less watering than the traditional buffalo grass.

Prairie Grasses

Many prairie grasses such as Indian grass, Switchgrass, Big Blue Stem and Little Blue Stem among others, are warm season grasses. Warm season grasses don't begin growing until the ground temperature gets to around 60 degrees. They go dormant in the fall after a freeze. The prairie grasses mentioned here are native to Nebraska and are very tolerant of drought conditions. Their roots are often as deep as the grass is tall. They are very beneficial to wildlife, especially if they are planted and maintained properly.

For more information on establishing natural and native prairie grasses, any of the sources below can provide a wealth of information.

Sources:

- Nebraska Extension Office
- Pheasants Forever: <https://nebraskapf.com>
- <https://prairienebraska.org/restoration/>
- <https://www.stockseed.com>
- <https://extension2.missouri.edu/g4672>