

REALTORS

Native Grass

[Home](#) / [Community Information](#) / [Common Area Landscaping](#) / [Native Grass](#)

The District no longer performs annual mowing of the native grass (except along the edge of sidewalks).

[Read about the rationale for our no-mow policy.](#)

One of the things that makes Colorado a uniquely attractive residential destination, is the beauty of its native landscapes. Most of our metropolitan areas are considered a zone 5 high mountain prairie, where certain plants and landscape features will grow much better than others, like the native grasslands that can be found in undeveloped areas, as well as many Metropolitan Districts and Master Planned Communities.

Native grasses are used both to create a microcosm of Colorado's beauty in our communities and conserve a precious natural resource – water. Due to the vastness of many of the residential landscapes in Districts, native grasses are used in areas where other turf species are not practical, because of their maintenance requirements and water consumption needs. Like other landscape features, native grasses must be cared for properly to promote their growth, health, and appearance.

The advantage of utilizing native grasses in our District is that with a little help, they will grow in Colorado's unique conditions. The most important aspect of developing and nurturing native is the maintenance program that follows the seeding and development stage. Many people look at a newly seeded native area and see an unkempt landscape. In reality, what you are seeing is an early stage of native grass development. These grasses are not meant to be watered or cut regularly, like bluegrass. They need to be allowed to progress and spread naturally, using strategic mowing, weeding and irrigation. Their proper maintenance is all about timing.

Time to establish: 3 to 7 years

After seeding and germination have occurred, bare spots are expected in the native grass. **Native grass takes approximately 3-7 years to fill in. This process occurs by avoiding mowing the native grass until after it has dropped its seed into the bare spots.**



Native grasses germinate and develop when the soil is cooler, in the spring and fall. To “go to seed” these grasses must grow seed heads and spread. Often this is weather dependent, but usually this process occurs through April, May and early June, and again in late September, October and into November.

‘Beauty band’ mowing. It is District (and developer) maintenance policy to mow ‘beauty bands’ along sidewalks. The band is one mower width (approximately 4 feet).

Weed Spray Application. Newer, or less full, native areas should never have pre-emergent (preventative herbicide applications to keep weeds that have not yet become visible from proliferating) applications performed. These treatments can kill native grasses, preventing growth and germination. Instead applications of post-emergent (controlling weeds that have already surfaced) weed control are best.

For newly seeded areas, and those that are still developing, less weed control is required. Unfortunately, this means that undesirable weeds will be present, and will have to be accepted while the native grass develops. Spot spraying of native weeds can be performed at this time, which targets weeds, and reduces the risk to desirable native. As native areas develop and improve, additional post-emergent applications can be performed. Generally this means two applications per year. The District has added a third weed spray application during 2022.

Older, full, established native can be treated with well-timed pre-emergent applications in the late spring, and can be coupled with a post emergent application in the mid to late summer.

Irrigation is temporary. As with any plant or turf, appropriate irrigation and soil conditions conducive to plant establishment will improve their success. Adding amended soil when developing new native will significantly increase success, and watering at this stage is also important. Once native areas are established, watering can be reduced, and in many cases, eliminated. This can take 3 to 7 years, but once established the native will thrive on natural precipitation, and the cost of irrigating it, eliminated.

By treating native delicately and understanding what is needed for it to develop and thrive, Districts throughout Colorado have enjoyed the tremendous beauty that was intended for them. Few will dispute the impressive appearance that well-established native grasses display on a breezy day. Like many things, patience is key, and gaining the commitment of the community to follow a well-defined maintenance program will offer the results that lead to an enjoyable open space filled with native grasses.

[Report an Issue](#)