

ARCHITECTURAL CONTROL COMMITTEE

Spring Shadows has beautiful older trees that have big canopies that provide lots of shade. But getting grass to grow under these larger trees can be a bit problematic; some homeowners cannot seem to get any grass to grow under them. This can be solved with a little planning and the right type of sod.

What is meant by 'shade'? Most garden/lawn websites state a lawn needs at least 4-5 hours of sunlight (direct or filtered) per day. Any amount of sunlight less than 4 hours each day is too shady for grass to grow well, if at all.

Low amounts of sunlight will result in a low amount of photosynthesis (necessary for plant growth) and leave the grass susceptible to both hot and cold weather, drought, and 'wear and tear.'

Therefore it is imperative to choose a grass that is highly shade-tolerant. For Texas these are Zeon Zoysia, Empire Zoysia, Palisades Zoysia, and Palmetto St. Augustine.

If you cannot get grass to grow under a tree:

- 1) Look at the tree and see if you can prune some tree limbs to allow more sunlight to shine onto the grass. It is best to meet with a certified arborist (tree expert) to prevent over-pruning and thereby damaging the tree.
- 2) Check for drainage. Too much moisture can result in the grass not growing.
- 3) Check the height of your lawn mower. Cutting the grass too short (also known as 'scalping') makes the grass struggle and hampers growth.
- 4) Remove leaves and grass clipping. Allowing leaves and grass clipping to remain on the top of the grass blocks the sunlight.
- 5) Minimize the traffic in the shaded areas.

Texas A&M Horticulture Dept has a publication (2010) addressing this issue and it can be found on both their website and on the SSCA website.^{1,2}

So pruning your trees, avoiding overwatering, removing leaves and grass clippings, not mowing the grass too short, and having a shade tolerant variety of grass will help you have a lush lawn that is able to both grow and thrive in the shade of mature trees here in Spring Shadows.

David Jurgens, Chairman

¹ <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2010-Turfgrass-Selection-for-Texaslres.pdf>

² <https://springshadows.org/community/newsletters/>