



## Featured Article

### CONTROLLING WARM SEASON GRASSES

Controlling warm season grasses is extremely challenging and more of an art than a science. The goal is to reduce the usage of chemicals while taking advantage of the changes in weather patterns and temperatures. It is important to balance the removal of the warm season grasses during their dormancy period when temperatures are conducive to support the germination of replacement grass seed. The timing of the removal process is critical for it to be fully effective.

Turfgrasses are divided into two categories; warm season and cool season grasses. The most common turfgrass variety used in Southern California is tall fescue, which is categorized as a cool season grass. A cool season grass is defined as those varieties with optimum growth at temperatures between 60° and 75°F. Warm season grasses, as the name implies, are those varieties that thrive at higher temperature ranges between 80° and 95°F and go dormant in the winter.

Invasive grasses, commonly called weed-like grasses, include *bermudagrass*, *kikuyu*, and *poa annua*, which are common in our area. These species are errantly referred to as warm season grasses because of their inherent quality to go dormant and turn yellow when temperatures drop down into the mid-40s and below, normally in the month of November. As the photo shows, it is easy to spot the different seasonal grass varieties, which dramatically reduces the aesthetic qualities of the turfgrass.



One of the best defenses against these invasive grasses is a healthy, thick and vigorous lawn. Dense, healthy turf will crowd out the unwanted grasses and block the sunlight needed for their seeds to germinate. However, under current water restrictions and reduced watering allocations, together with the unseasonably warm temperatures, healthy turf does not stand a fighting chance against their invasive enemies, thus

contributing to the challenges of controlling the warm season grasses.

The method that we have developed for removing invasive grasses is cutting them down to the ground, followed by applying a layer of a seed and soil mix to the areas.

Although controlling warm season grasses is a never-ending battle, we approach the task with perseverance and determination in order to keep our customers' turfgrass looking green and healthy.