

Tropical Buffalo axonopus compressus

Broadleaf Carpetgrass is known locally in North Qld as “buffalo’ .It is in its element growing on clay soils in the tropical green belt from Tully to Mossman, and Ingham. It is also favoured as a lawn grass from Sarina north, and in Townsville. How it performs each year is dependent on the extent of the monsoon season, mainly how long the period of rainfall humidity and heavy cloud cover persists. Typically from Tully to Mossman, the monsoon arrives mid January and lasts up to end of April. Broadleaf carpetgrass is looked at as the lazy man’s lawn, its qualities being that it is competitive (crowds out weeds),is very easy on the mower, and no matter how short it is mowed,because the leaf starts at the ground , it is impossible to scalp the grass. A popular sentiment is that it recovers well after periods of drought (3-4 months) , and beats the weeds by nature of its competitive growth. It is also the most water dependent turf grass grown in the tropics, and few people try to keep the water up to it in dry conditions. This is where the lazy mans definition comes from, following the wet season, it stays green until mid August or so, as the temps rise and rainfall ends, it browns off quickly and after three months or so, the ground stays almost bare until good rainfall arrives. The person maintaining the lawn has only mowed it while green, has not wasted any water or time, and starts mowing again when it recovers. Little to no weed control , fertilising or watering. Treated this way, carpetgrass can be a low maintenance environmentally sustainable turf grass.

Soils: prefers slightly acidic clay soils with good organic content and good moisture holding capacity. Does not tolerate waterlogging or free draining sands . Is the most popular choice for new lawns in new residential estates with clay based soils. However, in most sub-divisions, the developer has left the soil physically, nutritionally and biologically dead, so the carpetgrass struggles from day 1, and it becomes a lengthy process to reverse the unfriendly soil conditions.

Nutrition: responds well to high nitrogen and organics like dynamic lifter.

Watering: Broadleaf carpetgrass is stoloniferous and has a shallow root system, therefore is highly water dependent to maintain growth.In the wet tropics, it is truly in its element.

Because shading helps reduce evaporation, its water demand is less, unless fighting other factors like competition from tree and garden roots. As temperatures and evaporation rise, carpetgrass struggles quickly because of its shallow roots .Watering heavily rarely maintains colour and growth, fertilising regularly and watering heavily is the only way to keep the grass in good condition.

Pests and Diseases: Lawn armyworms are the most common issue in the tropics, and some years are worse than others. .Broadleaf carpetgrass is just as prone to armyworm attack as any other lawn grass, it is simply the Nitrogen content of the plant that drives the attractiveness to the moths.

