UNL Extension: Acreage Insights

Acreage eNews-May 2013

http://acreage.unl.edu

Tough Places to Grow Turf
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As versatile as lawn grasses may be, there are many locations where they just won't flourish. In general, a lawn needs

- at least 5 hours of sun each day,
- a large uninterrupted area,
- well-drained soil, and
- a relatively flat grade or slightly rolling topography.

Slopes, shade, compacted soils, heavy foot traffic, and poor air circulation should prompt you to consider alternatives. Resist the temptation to try to make due with grass on a poor site. The chart on this page suggests solutions for several common problems.

A "hell strip" is an awkward area between the sidewalk and the street, surrounding your mailbox, or falling between your lawn and the neighbor's driveway. Grasses grown in these areas are apt to become stressed by heat from the street and sidewalk, salt spray, and soil compaction from heavy traffic. Grass is not the right plant choice for these locations. Instead consider short ornamental grasses and heat tolerant perennials such as yarrow, junipers, fleeceflower, sedum, coreopsis, lilyturf, daylilies, and gazania.

Problem Area	Possible Solution
Thin turf under shade trees	Plant shade-adapted groundcover or grasses

High-traffic areas	Install bluestone, flagstone, or other pavers
Moss or mildew in shady area	Remove turf and moss, plant shade-adapted perennials and add wood chip mulch. Consider removing or pruning nearby trees to allow more sunlight penetration. Test the soil to determine if the pH is a problem.
Grass on steep slope	Plant junipers, Hall's honeysuckle, crown vetch, or other ornamentals on the slope