

St. Augustine Lawn Maintenance

Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture



St. Augustine grass is probably the most popular turf used for lawns in the area. It is coarse-textured and the most shade-tolerant warm season grass available. Since it is spring, and the air and soil temperatures are starting to warm, here are a few tips to consider as the growing season is upon us.

- If you need to plant some new sod, starting in April is a good time to install. From April through the rest of spring, growing conditions are ideal for establishing a new lawn.
- The first application of fertilizer should occur when the lawn is actively growing; wait until you have mowed the lawn two times before thinking about an application. If you apply too early, you are just feeding the cool-season weeds that are growing in the lawn.



- If you had your soil tested, apply at the recommended rate from the results.
- If you did not have your soil tested, apply a rate of 1lb. of nitrogen/1000ft up to 4 times over the growing season.
- Mow at a height between 2-4" weekly or as needed. Never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf tissue.
- From May through July post-emergent herbicides can be applied as needed for summer annual and perennial weeds.
- If you have an irrigation system, check it for any issues and have it ready for the season.
- Irrigate only when necessary to prevent wilting, overwatering can lead to poor lawn performance and disease problems.
- If you are not sure how much water to apply or how often, go to the Water My Yard website and download the app. You will receive free weekly notifications on your irrigation schedule.
<https://watermyyard.org>
- If there are any areas with poor drainage or are compacted, consider an aerification treatment to help relieve these issues.

If you need additional information on St. Augustine grass or any of the other warm-season turf species, please visit the Aggie Turf website. <https://aggieturf.tamu.edu/>

It's All About the Basil

by Brandi Keller, Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator



Everyone has their favorite herb, but not all herbs can be translated to "king" or "kingly" as basil is in Greek. There are 35 species of basil (*Ocimum*), but most of what we use is the species *Ocimum basilicum*, commonly known as sweet basil. Basil is a sun-loving herb that prefers rich, well-drained soil. It grows well in the garden, along landscape edges, in pots, and even on an indoor windowsill.

Remember to harvest or pinch your basil to prevent blooming and to create more leaves. Flowers tell the plant its life cycle is complete and the oils that make basil so important start to dry and diminish. Fresh cut basil is best stored in a glass of water at room temperature or can be preserved by drying or freezing. Since that oil content in the leaf also dries, you'll get a more potently-preserved herb by freezing. Of course, pesto is always reliable to preserve that kingly taste.

Here are a few more resources:

[Basil Factsheet](#)

[Basil Diseases](#)

[Basil and Pesto](#)

[Grow More Basil Faster with Cuttings](#)



Photo source: Park Seed

'Nufar F1 Hybrid' is an improved hybrid sweet basil that differs slightly from Genovese, but Nufar is disease resistant to fusarium wilt, a soil-borne fungus that prevents the uptake of water into the plant.



Photo source: Brandi Keller

Master Gardeners love to grow African blue basil in vegetable gardens to attract pollinators. The pink/ purple flower stems are long, seeds are sterile, and it attracts more pollinators than most plants.



Photo source: Taste of Home

While basil is attractive, it also makes food taste fresh and healthy. Here is a different recipe by Taste of Home that uses plain yogurt, basil, sugar, walnuts, and lemon zest. Click [HERE](#) for recipe.

If you missed the "All About Basil" talk - Click [HERE](#).



Sausage And The History On How It Ended Up On Our Grills Across Texas!

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, ANR

Ever heard of the Texas Trinity? Well, more than likely if you are a native Texan or die-hard BBQ fan, you have heard this floating around your favorite local BBQ restaurant driving the backroads of Hwy 290 from Houston to Austin or surrounding areas.

The "Texas Trinity" is known in the BBQ world as Brisket, Ribs, and Sausage, all representing the diverse influences and history of smoked meats in the Lone Star State. Each can be traced back to origins that are written and "smoked" into the history of meats that Texans have become famous for.

German butchers in Central Texas used the cattle business to create beef meat markets and later cooked meats. Priding itself on smoked brisket techniques that are handed down in the family along with the family bible. Pork ribs can be traced to Southern US and African American cooking traditions where whole-hog cookery is still the primary focus of BBQ joints in those areas.

And what about Sausage you may ask? At most BBQ joints in Texas, ordering sausage from some can almost be an afterthought. Over time, you weren't really given many options to choose from, usually, "regular" or "jalapeno".

Beyond that, we were left at the mercy of the pitmaster as to what he might surprise you with on your tray next to the brisket and ribs.

The story and history of sausage in Texas is a long journey. The typical sausage served at our favorite joints originated in the areas of Europe that are now Poland and the Czech Republic.

Although German immigrants in Texas usually get most of the credit making Central-Texas style BBQ popular, we can't forget about our Polish and Czech brothers and sisters also having a big influence on history, especially when it comes to sausage.



Sausage And The History On How It Ended Up On Our Grills Across Texas! (Continued)

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, ANR



You might wonder how did Polish and Czech sausages become the go-to choice for most backyard and professional grillers? It comes down to appealing flavors and texture... The flavor generally combines a mix of pork and beef with a combination of spices like salt, pepper, garlic, and paprika. All the meat and spices are coarsely ground and stuffed into a thin pork casing which is then usually smoked and then set out in the meat case for the consumer.

Packaged sausages, like those, are the grocery stores contain ingredients like sodium nitrate used as a preservative to extend the shelf life.

Regional sausages are also popular in local BBQ joints in certain parts of the state. Here in Texas, Elgin, located partly Bastrop and Travis Counties, has declared itself "The Sausage Capital of Texas". History has this dating back to 1866, when Mr. William Moon, a butcher from nearby Hog Eye, opened the first BBQ joint in Texas know as Southside Market.

Their reign on the sausage market would be challenged in 1949 when Hermina and Rudolph Meyer opened a drive-in grocery and sold their raw German-style family recipe.

Locals still argue about which sausage is best, Southside or Meyers, but both have played a role in having the Texas Legislature to proclaim, Elgin, "The Sausage Capital of Texas". For more information on the history and the methods for making your own sausage, join me on Thursday, April 15, 2021 @ 10:00 AM, for my lecture on "Sausage Making 101". [Register here](#)

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Brandi Keller – Harris County Master Gardener
Program Coordinator

05/20 **Growing Fabulous Houseplants**

Paul Winski – Texas A&M AgriLife County
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