

Choosing a warm season grass seed – what you need to look for

When shopping for warm season grass seed, remember that price isn't everything. An inexpensive packet of seed might seem like a bargain at the register, but it's no bargain if all you end up with is weeds or dead grass.

In making your seed selection, the best approach is to carefully compare the specifications label (similar to an ingredients list on food packaging). As with food packaging, what is written on the front of the packet may be misleading as to the actual contents. Even packets that claim to be **Couch** or **Kikuyu** seed blends or 'arid', 'summer' or 'drought tolerant' may only contain small amounts of the seed variety that you are looking for.

Many seed packs contain a 'nursery' grass such as ryegrass that will compete against the warm season grass then die out when not watered.

Looking at the label will ensure you're getting the most successful warm season seed for your money and local conditions.

1. Search the specification label for the kind of seed inside. Warm season grass varieties available in seed format include **Couch** and **Kikuyu** and each is suited to different conditions. See our warm season grass 101 fact sheet to help you decide which variety is best for you. It is important to note that buffalo grass cannot successfully be grown from seed – so look for other varieties or consider instant turf if this variety is particularly suited to your conditions.
2. Look for packets that contain a high seed count of the variety you are after. Look for a high seed count – i.e. a number higher than 80%. Seed mixtures often contain a lot of other 'filler' seed types, which may grow well initially, but are likely to die over summer. Don't be tempted by these varieties, as you are likely to end up with a patchy surface with dead areas at the end of summer.
3. Another key indicator of the quality of the seed is the germination percentage. This is the amount of live seed in the bag. A germination rating of 85% or higher is good. The higher the rating, the better chance your seed has of growing successfully, providing you sow and care for it properly. There should also be a date on the bag indicating when the seed will expire. Look for seed that has an expiry date well into the future.

If in doubt, visit your local nursery for expert guidance on choosing the right warm season grass seed for your yard.

Characteristics of warm season grass in Melbourne

	Water Efficiency	Drought Tolerance	Heat Tolerance	Shade Tolerance	Colour Retention	Wear Tolerance	Fertiliser Efficiency	Salt Tolerance	Frost Tolerance
Couch	High	Excellent	High	Low	Medium	Excellent	Excellent	High	Low
Kikuyu	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Medium	Medium	Excellent	Medium	High	Low
Buffalo*	High	Excellent	High	Excellent	High	Medium	Medium	High	High

*Please note that Buffalo grass cannot be grown from seed – it is only available as instant turf or 'runners'.



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