Floratam St. Augustine Maintenance Recommendations

Floratam St. Augustine Quick Tips

- Floratam can be installed year-round, even during dormancy. In winter, water it in well and avoid installing in the days right before a forecast hard freeze.
- Floratam is a full-sun St. Augustine. It needs 6+ hours of direct sunlight and does not handle deep shade the way Palmetto or Raleigh do.
- Floratam will yellow some post-harvest, especially in temps 85°F & hotter. It will green back up with prompt installation & water (see our common grass concerns).
- Floratam is the most drought-tolerant St. Augustine we carry and builds a deep root system, but it still needs regular water to establish and during extreme heat.
- Floratam has less cold tolerance than our other St. Augustine varieties, which is why we offer it in the San Antonio area and south. Some browning after a hard freeze is normal; it recovers as temperatures warm.
- Purple-tinted stolons ("runners") at certain times of the year are normal for Floratam — not a disease or a nutrient problem.
- Keep the soil underneath your new Floratam saturated 6 inches deep until the roots establish into the soil.

Mow Frequently

- You can mow your new Floratam on the highest setting once the roots are established, you have a little over 3 inches of vertical growth, and the seams are filling in.
- Mow as often as every 2-3 days to reach & maintain a height of 2 to 3 inches to promote density through increased lateral growth.
- Always observe the 1/3 rule, never removing more than one-third of the leaf tissue in a single mowing.
- Keep Floratam at the taller end of the range during summer heat and drought; longer leaves shade the soil and conserve moisture.

Fertilizing & Pre-Emergent Weed Control

- Avoid feast-or-famine. An overabundance of nitrogen can encourage lawn problems, such as Brown Patch fungal disease, grub worms & chinch bugs.
- Floratam needs 3-4 total pounds of nitrogen per thousand sq ft, per year. It is a vigorous grower and needs a little less nitrogen than Raleigh or Palmetto.
- A weed-free yard is best achieved by maintaining a healthy, dense lawn through good cultural practices & healthy soil.

- Pre-emergent herbicides should be included in every lawn care schedule.
- Use post-emergent herbicides only as needed.

MONTH	FERTILIZER & SOIL BUILDING	PRE-EMERGENT HERBICIDE
FEB-MARCH	In the absence of soil test recommendations, apply all-purpose fertilizer, such as Lesco 15-5-10.	Apply pre-emergent when soil temperatures reach 55°F for 2-3 consecutive days.
LATE MARCH-EARLY APRIL	Apply slow-release 3-1-2 ratio fertilizer with iron & sulfur. Recommended fertilizer ratios: 19-5-10; 19-4-10; 15-5-10.	NONE
MAY-EARLY JUNE	NONE	Apply 2nd application of a pre-emergent herbicide.
LATE JUNE-EARLY JULY	Apply organic slow-release fertilizer with iron & sulfur. Do not apply synthetic, fast-release nitrogen during high temperatures.	NONE
JULY-SEPT	Apply MicroLife Brown Patch to condition the soil & help prevent fungal diseases.	NONE
OCT-EARLY NOV	In the absence of soil test recommendations, apply all-purpose fertilizer, such as Lesco 15-5-10.	Apply a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent spring weeds.
NOV	Apply a phosphorus winterizing fertilizer for southern grasses to help with winter hardiness — especially worthwhile for Floratam given its lower cold tolerance.	Apply pre-emergent when soil temps drop below 70°F.
DEC-JAN	Apply a bio-stimulant with micro-nutrients to increase microbial activity & encourage healthy soil building.	NONE

Post-Emergent Herbicides

Be sure to positively identify the target weed before choosing a post-emergent herbicide. This will ensure proper herbicide selection & successful control. The Turfgrass Weeds photo guide by AggieTurf should help identify common weeds in your lawn. A broad-spectrum post-emergent

herbicide, such as Bayer's Celsius WG, is safe for St. Augustine varieties and will target the most common grassy & broadleaf weeds. For nutsedge, Sedgehammer+ works best.

Like all St. Augustine grasses, Floratam is sensitive to 2,4-D and MSMA-type products, especially in temperatures above 85°F — always check that the label lists St. Augustine before applying.

The products to use depend on the target weeds, level of infestation, and ambient temperatures. Be careful, and always read the label. Most herbicides are temperature-sensitive. Contact a lawn care professional or your local ag extension for assistance if you are unsure about the type of weed or product to use. To prevent herbicide resistance, you should rotate MOAs (modes of action).

Fungal Disease & Pest Control

Many common lawn problems present the same way, and the underlying issue is often misdiagnosed. This lawn-problems flowchart will help you troubleshoot & determine the cause for a decline in your lawn so that you can take the correct action quickly before the problem grows out of control.

Further, lawn problems usually point to an underlying issue, such as over or under-fertilizing, mowing, watering, etc. Aim to prevent these issues through well-timed, proper cultural practices. Use soil-building bio-stimulants to improve soil health, increase beneficial microbes & fungi, and help prevent lawn problems.

Floratam notes. Floratam was developed by Texas A&M and the University of Florida as a St. Augustine Decline (SAD) virus and chinch bug resistant selection. It remains resistant to SAD; chinch bug resistance has weakened in many areas over the decades, so inspect hot, sunny, drought-stressed spots (along driveways, sidewalks and south-facing slopes) during summer for yellow-to-brown patches that do not respond to water, and treat promptly. Excess nitrogen and evening watering in summer favor grey leaf spot; wet, mild weather in spring and fall favors brown patch and take-all root rot — water in the morning and keep to the fertilizer schedule above.

Chemical treatments can be damaging to the environment & the health of your soil. They should be used sparingly & responsibly. However, they are sometimes necessary if the lawn becomes infected or invaded by fungal diseases or deleterious pests. For fungal diseases, use systemic, broad-spectrum fungicides, such as azoxystrobin or propiconazole. For lawn pests, such as fire ants, cutworms, fall armyworms, grub worms, and chinch bugs, use insecticides like cypermethrin, permethrin, and zeta-cypermethrin. Rotate fungicides & insecticides from different IRAC/FRAC Groups to avoid resistance in the future.