

# turf *trends*

An Atlanta  
Backyard

*Retreat*

One Family's  
Journey from  
Stress to Savings  
and Success

Lawns in the midst of a bustling city are a rarity, even in the tree-covered Southern city of Atlanta. For Keith and Deborah Cureton, their distinctive lawn serves as a haven that takes them away from the constantly humming streets around the corner.

Keith finds mowing the lawn relaxing, while Deb enjoys learning to plant flowers and vegetables.

“It’s a unique house in Atlanta to have a yard,” Keith said. “It gives you a feeling that, even though you’re in the city, you have a home like somebody else who lives out in a rural area.”

However, before transitioning to TifTuf Bermudagrass, the Cureton family found their backyard added stress to their lives rather than solace.

## Tales of Backyard Struggles

Moving into their Brookhaven home in 2015, the Curetons updated the charming house to suit their style and then began to tackle the lawn. When the family first arrived, both the front and back lawns were planted in Meyer Zoysiagrass. However, the Meyer did not tolerate the shade of the back lawn. It had to go.

Eliminating the Meyer Zoysia and a variety of other failing plants in the backyard meant an opportunity to begin anew. The first item on the agenda: new grass. With shade from the house and garage, a fence surrounding the yard and an oak tree towering above, shade tolerance was of the

“ I guess the best way to describe our new grass is that it is **EASY!** Great color, heat tolerant with limited need for watering and direct sunlight. ”

utmost importance. The Curetons chose Fescue grass for this reason and installed their sod the end of April 2015. However, the heat of the Georgia sun wore the Fescue down quickly and took quite a toll on Keith and Deb as well.

“I was literally watering night and day to keep the Fescue alive, and in the end it still died,” Deb said. “I think we spent more money on the water than the grass.”

Within a year, most of the Fescue had died out, and the Curetons were in search of a solution. They found the answer in TifTuf Bermudagrass.

## The Renovation

Almost a year to the day after installing their Fescue, the Curetons renovated their lawn yet again by planting TifTuf Bermuda.

TifTuf was bred by the University of Georgia-Tifton in 1992 and stood out among other Bermudagrass varieties because of its ability to stay green under drought conditions rather than going dormant. Over the past two decades, TifTuf has undergone research around the country to determine and test other favorable characteristics — one of which is the ability to withstand some shade.

“The maintenance of TifTuf is far easier than what we’ve experienced with the Meyer Zoysia that was originally back there to the Fescue that we put in, which was impossible to keep going,” Keith said.

## Ready for a Close-Up

The Curetons’ TifTuf Bermuda lawn remained green while the cool months set in during its first year of establishment.



October 25, 2016



November 7, 2016



December 2, 2016

# See the Savings

The ease of maintenance on TifTuf allowed for the addition of new landscape elements in the back lawn. Without constantly worrying about the livelihood of their grass, the family had the ability to plant and care for nine new trees, an extensive number of new and transplanted hedges, several ground cover plants and even raised bed vegetable gardens.

## Saving Money, Water and Time – Economic and Environmental Benefits

The 2016 overhaul involved a high volume of other landscape plantings in addition to the establishment of TifTuf sod. However, the Curetons used much less water than in 2015 when they only planted Fescue. In fact, they used almost half the water in 2016 compared to 2015.

Water usage and billing cycles are calculated every two months. The Curetons compared their water bills for July and August — typically the hottest months of the year — for 2015 and 2016. Even with the addition of their 2016 landscape plantings, Deb and Keith saw a 48 percent decrease in their water bill from 2015 to 2016.

Saving money is on the top of most homeowners' lists, but environmental friendliness is ever important, especially considering Georgia's drought conditions during 2016. In July and August of 2016 the family used 24,500 fewer gallons of water. This meant they used 44 percent less water than in the prior year.

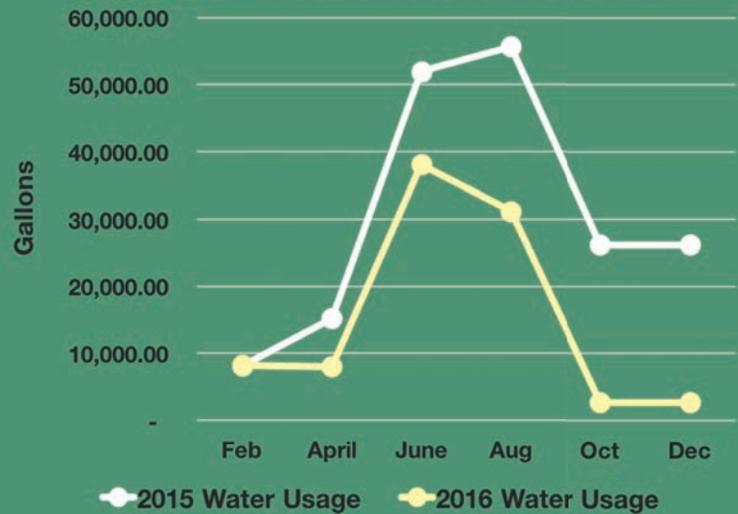
(See infographic to the right.)

As if saving money and conserving water weren't enough, TifTuf cut down significantly on the amount of time Deb spent watering the back lawn.

"It took two hours to water everything," Deb said of when they installed Fescue. "You're spot watering. This needs a little, and this needs a little."

Thanks to their TifTuf installation, two hours' worth of watering decreased to 40 minutes. The Curetons switched from a wall-to-wall watering strategy to simply identifying areas of stress on their TifTuf lawn.

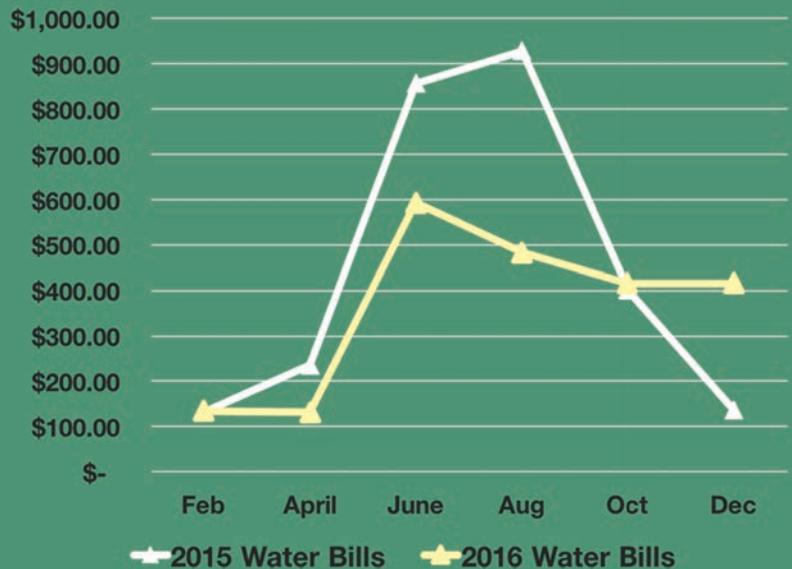
## 2015 vs 2016 Water Usage



# 44%

The Curetons saw a 44% decrease in their water usage after converting their lawn from Fescue to TifTuf Bermudagrass. In addition to TifTuf, they planted ornamental shrubs and trees during 2016. Still, the water use remained lower in 2016.

## 2015 vs 2016 Water Bills



# 48%

As water use decreased, it's no wonder the money savings did as well. The switch to TifTuf saved the Curetons 48% in water bills from 2015 to 2016.



Deb Cureton paid less attention to lawn maintenance and watering and switched her focus to vegetables and flower gardening once TifTuf Bermuda replaced the old Fescue.



Lucy, a treasured member of the family, loves her new TifTuf lawn as a place to play and relax.



TifTuf handles the partially shaded areas of the lawn where there are at least 4 hours of sun each day.

## Real Curb Appeal – Staying Green Longer

The idea that a grass could stay green year-round appealed to the Curetons, and that's one reason they initially chose Fescue grass. The demise of their Fescue in the summer, however, wasn't so appealing. Though Bermuda is a warm season grass, Deb and Keith found their TifTuf lawn stayed green longer than other warm season varieties, including the Meyer Zoysia currently in their front lawn.

"After Thanksgiving the front yard was dormant, but the backyard was still bright green," Keith said. "It wasn't until close to Christmas when we came home to see it had gone totally dormant."

National Turfgrass Evaluation Program trials across the U.S. have found TifTuf goes dormant later in the fall, while research has also shown that TifTuf greens up earlier in the spring than competing varieties of Bermudagrass. Thus, TifTuf provides more green earlier and later for enhanced curb appeal and enjoyment.

By the beginning of March, the back lawn began to return to its shade of bright green after only a few months of dormancy.

"Once the warmth hit it, it seems like it just came out of dormancy," Keith said.

## Big Plans for the Back Yard – The Upside of a Tough Grass

One final benefit resulting from the Fescue transition is the durability of the Curetons' new lawn.

"You think about Fescue, you think about a bunch of people out there, and they're playing and running

around. They wear Fescue out pretty quickly," Keith said. "The durability of TifTuf is almost like a mat."

The self-healing nature of TifTuf Bermuda will allow the family to entertain in their backyard — a new and exciting possibility. The Curetons plan to host barbecues and corn-hole tournaments during the summer now that their grass doesn't require such a gentle touch.

"I guess the best way to describe our new grass is that it is easy!" Deb said. "Great color, heat tolerant with limited need for watering and direct sunlight."

Now that the TifTuf has been established for a couple of years and their landscape plantings are no longer new, the Curetons say they are excited to see the amount of water they will conserve, but they are more enthusiastic about what the backyard means for their family.

Moreover, it is an area for Deb to learn about planting and Keith to enjoy caring for the grass. The lawn is a place to play for Dexter and Lucy, the beloved family pets. It's a space for three granddaughters to run around safely.

Most importantly, it's finally the backyard they imagined.



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