



Extension
Turfgrass Science

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA TURFGRASS SCIENCE

The Turfgrass Science program at the University of Minnesota is part of the Department of Horticultural Science in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences. At our Turfgrass, Research Outreach and Education Center (TROE) on the Saint Paul campus we conduct research on low-input turfgrasses for cold climates, and refine maintenance recommendations based on environmental impact.

Minnesota Home Lawns:

The turfgrasses that are typically planted on lawns, parks, and golf courses in Minnesota are considered cool-season grasses. These grasses show increased growth during the spring and fall and reduced growth during the heat of the summer. Most home lawns in Minnesota are composed primarily of Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and fine fescue. A brief description of several lawn grasses is shown below.

SPECIES	CHARACTERISTICS	MAINTENANCE	HIGHLIGHTS
FINE FESCUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Includes creeping red fescues, hard, Chewings, and sheep fescue - Drought, shade, and salt tolerant - Often mixed with Kentucky bluegrass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower maintenance requirement, including less irrigation, mowing, and fertilizing - Do not mow in summer heat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All fine fescue species are excellent for home lawns - Hard fescue is the most drought tolerant - Sheep fescue = low maintenance
TALL FESCUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performs well in MN - Deep rooting -> drought tolerant - Tolerant of wear and traffic - Excellent shade performance - Slightly more coarse than K.B. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower maintenance requirement - Spring seedings will survive winter better in the first year - Do not plant in areas that hold ice in the winter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drought tolerant - Heat and traffic tolerant
KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dark green appearance and spreading ability with rhizomes - May not grow well in shade - "Boat-shaped" leaf tip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher maintenance requirement (fertilizer, water, etc.) than most other cool-season turfgrasses - Frequent mowing required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most popular turfgrass in MN - Used on home lawns, parks, athletic fields, golf courses - most widely available species as sod
PERENNIAL RYEGRASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lacks winterhardiness - Good wear tolerance - Pointed leaf tip - Often produces unsightly stems after spring seed production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher maintenance requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used on home lawns, athletic fields, golf courses - Very quick establishment - Wide range of genetic green color
CREEPING BENTGRASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Found on golf course greens, tees, and fairways in the northern United States - Can be a significant weed in home lawns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be mowed as low as one-tenth of an inch - Requires intense management and specialized equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not recommended for home lawns - Selective removal in a home lawn can be achieved by the use of the active ingredient mesotrione
VELVET BENTGRASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be used on golf course greens in the northern United States - Extremely fine leaf texture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be mowed as low as one-tenth of an inch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More research is needed before it can be recommended for use on golf courses in Minnesota - Not recommended for home lawns

Options for Ultra-Low Maintenance

- Prairie Junegrass, Tufted Hairgrass, Buffalograss
- Natives of North America; good for non-irrigated areas

Options for Dense Shade

- Supina Bluegrass, Rough Bluegrass
- Prefer areas with plentiful moisture; seed expensive

For more information:

turf.umn.edu

extension.umn.edu/turfgrass



Jon Trappe
University of Minnesota
Turfgrass Extension Educator
jtrappe@umn.edu