



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 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
<b>FINE FESCUES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Includes 5 species: strong creeping red, slender creeping red, hard, Chewings, and sheep fescues</li> <li>- Drought, shade, and salt tolerant</li> <li>- Often mixed with Kentucky bluegrass</li> <li>- Called "fine" due to narrow leaf blades</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lower maintenance requirements, including less irrigation, mowing, and fertilizing</li> <li>- Do not mow in summer heat</li> <li>- Fertilize in fall if needed for low-maintenance lawns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A fine fescue mix of strong creeping red, Chewings and hard fescue is excellent for home lawns as both no-mow and low maintenance</li> <li>- Hard fescue is the most drought tolerant</li> <li>- Sheep fescue = low maintenance</li> </ul>
<b>TALL FESCUE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Performs well in MN</li> <li>- Deep rooting -&gt; drought tolerant</li> <li>- Tolerant of wear and traffic</li> <li>- Excellent shade performance</li> <li>- Slightly coarser than Kentucky bluegrass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Purchase turf-type tall fescues for lawns</li> <li>- Lower maintenance requirement</li> <li>- Spring seedings will survive winter better in the first year</li> <li>- Do not plant in areas that hold ice in the winter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One of the most drought tolerant turfgrasses for MN due to deep and extensive roots</li> <li>- Heat and traffic tolerant</li> </ul>
<b>KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dark green appearance and spreading ability with rhizomes</li> <li>- May not grow well in shade</li> <li>- "Boat-shaped" leaf tip</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher maintenance requirement (fertilizer, water, etc.) than most other cool-season turfgrasses</li> <li>- Frequent mowing required</li> <li>- May create dense thatch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most popular turfgrass in MN</li> <li>- Has fast recovery</li> <li>- Used on home lawns, parks, athletic fields, golf courses</li> <li>- Most widely available species as sod</li> </ul>
<b>PERENNIAL RYEGRASS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lacks winterhardiness</li> <li>- Good wear tolerance</li> <li>- Pointed leaf tip</li> <li>- Often produces unsightly stems after spring seed production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher maintenance requirement</li> <li>- Very quick establishment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Used on home lawns, athletic fields, golf courses</li> <li>- Some perennial ryegrass seed production occurs in northern MN</li> </ul>
<b>Options for Ultra-Low Maintenance</b>		<b>Options for Dense Shade</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prairie Junegrass, Tufted Hairgrass, Buffalograss</li> <li>- Natives of North America; good for non-irrigated areas</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supina Bluegrass, Rough Bluegrass</li> <li>- Prefer areas with plentiful moisture; seed expensive</li> </ul>	

For more information:

[turf.umn.edu](http://turf.umn.edu)

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