

If you live where cool-climate grasses flourish and you don't want to sod your new lawn, then seeding is the alternative. Starting a lawn from seed requires careful attention to soil preparation, planning, and--when it comes to purchasing your seed--smart shopping.

It's important to choose the right seed for your lawn. For example, should you plant bluegrass, one of the fine fescues, a bent grass, or perhaps a perennial ryegrass?

Generally, the best answer is to select a mixture (a combination of species) or a blend (a combination of cultivars of the same species). Most bags of commercial lawn seeds are mixtures. That way, you can have one type of grass that does well under certain conditions, along with one or more other species that thrive in different circumstances. If disease strikes, the damage probably will be limited to just one of the grasses in the mixture. Also, choose your mixture according to the amount of sunlight different areas of your lawn receive. Do you have many shady areas? If so, choose grasses that do better in shade (such as fescue varieties).

### **Kentucky bluegrass**

This is an unbeatable choice for many lawns. It is beautiful and reasonably easy to maintain. In addition, there are many excellent botanical varieties to select: Arista, Baron, Fylking, Glade, Majestic, Merion, Nugget, Plush, Prato, Sydsport. Mowing height for most bluegrasses ranges from 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 inches, with slightly higher grass required in some situations.

### **Fescues**

Fescues are well adapted to poorer, sandy soils and can tolerate dry shade, so one of the fine chewings fescues is often included in a lawn seed mixture with bluegrass. Popular fescue varieties include Highlight, Jamestown, Koket, and Ruby. Because of their adaptability to poor soil, fescues seldom need fertilizing. Otherwise, their maintenance requirements are similar to bluegrass, so they make excellent partners.

### **Tall fescues**

The tall fescue, on the other hand, is a coarse grass, not usually desirable for fine lawns, but useful in high traffic areas and where other grasses won't grow. If you plant one of the coarse fescues, you take the chance that it might spread to finer surrounding lawns (much to a neighbor's dismay!).

### **Perennial ryegrasses**

Perennial ryegrasses have made rapid progress in recent years with the discovery of many outstanding new cultivars. Once considered too coarse for fine lawns, today the improved ryegrasses nearly match bluegrass in beauty and ease of maintenance. The real benefit, though, is that they start quickly--sometimes showing a touch of green within a few days after seeding. Among the improved cultivars are Citation, Compas, Derby, Game, Manhattan, NK-100, NK-200, Omega, and Pennfine.

### **Bent grasses**

These grasses grow well only in moist, humid climates, or where they get day-in, day-out care (on a golf course, for example). Close cropping is a must, so bent grasses require frequent mowings. Colonial bent grasses require the least care; creeping bent grasses the most.

