

KANSAS Turf Guide

A Quick Guide to help you weed through the various turf grass types in Kansas.

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Fescue

Without a doubt, tall Fescue is the most popular turf type in Kansas. Fescue is a cool season grass that has been adapted to grow exceptionally well from the transition zone in the central United States, all the way up north into Canada. Tall Fescue turf greens up early in the spring and will remain green late into the fall or early winter. There are many different varieties of Fescue, but the lawn or turf type grasses can be divided into two categories: Tall Fescue and fine Fescue.



Tall Fescue

Tall Fescue, the most widely used turf grass, has a moderately coarse texture, dark green color and is adapted to many different soil and climatic conditions. Among its strengths are good drought

tolerance, uniformity in appearance, and excellent weed and disease resistance. Kentucky 31, for example, has a history as one of the most common tall Fescue cultivars used for both pastureland and home lawns.



Fine Fescue

"Turf type" tall Fescues are the newer and more attractive cultivars for use specifically in lawns. These newer varieties have a finer leaf blade, greater density, better shade tolerance, darker green color and

lower growth habit than Kentucky 31. Fine Fescues, while widely used in Kansas, do not tolerate the Kansas summers as well as tall Fescue. However, under the right conditions, fine Fescue can work to fill in shaded areas of the lawn, since they are the most shade tolerant of any lawn grass. Certain hard and chewing varieties are commonly used this way, even though their heat tolerance is generally considered poor for our area.

Fescue Care

Fescue lawns are established by seeding or installed as sod. Mowing heights recommended for our area are no less than 2.5 inches in the spring and fall while temperatures are cool and 3 to 4 inches during the heat of the summer. Mowing the turf high during the summer months will help with heat and drought resistance.

The following are some of the best varieties for our area recommended by Kansas State University with reduced susceptibility to summer stress and disease*: Apache II, Coyote, Duster, Falcon II, Jaguar 3, Aztec II, Tar Heel, Shenandoah II, Rembrandt, Masterpiece, Millennium, Wolfpack, Olympic Gold, Crossfire II, Plantation, Bonsai 2000, Watchdog, Rebel 2000, Arid 3.

Kentucky Bluegrass



Bluegrass is one of the most popular turf grasses in the northern United States. Like fescue, Bluegrass greens up early in the spring and stays green well into the late fall. The color ranges from bright green to bluish green. It will generally require more

water to retain its green color than other turf grass species, but will survive hot, dry periods by going dormant if not watered.

Bluegrass Habit

Bluegrass varieties can tolerate light to medium traffic and spread by underground stems called rhizomes. Although it performs poorly during the typical Kansas summer, under the right conditions Bluegrass can make a very beautiful lawn.

Bluegrass Care

Bluegrass is a cool season grass, best grown in well-drained, moist, fertile, soils. Although a full sun turf, bluegrass can tolerate light shade. Bluegrass cultivars differ in texture, disease resistance, color and are prone to thatch accumulation. Fall aerating is recommended. Mowing heights recommended for our area are 2 to 3.5 inches. Mowing the turf high during the summer months will help with heat and drought resistance.

The following are some of the best varieties for our area recommended by Kansas State University with reduced susceptibility to summer stress and disease*: America, Apollo, Blacksburg, Brilliant, Champagne, Challenger, Chateau, Classic, Eclipse, Jefferson, Jewel, Livingston, Midnight, Odyssey, Rugby II, Showcase, Unique.

Zoysia



Another turf that has adapted well to Kansas is Zoysia, which greens up later and goes dormant sooner than a cool season Fescue. It is a lighter green, warm season grass that is not especially susceptible to disease. It features excellent heat and drought resistance and is also winter hardy.

Zoysia Habit

Zoysia is a low growing and creeping grass that is slow to establish but makes a beautiful lawn. It forms a dense sod spreading by above ground and underground stems, called rhizomes and stolons, which creates a fine to medium textured turf. When fully established, it has been described as a carpeted lawn that competes well with weeds to claim its space. Be advised though; Zoysia, like Bermuda grass will invade landscape beds, making adjacent turf and vegetable gardens a little difficult to control.

Zoysia Care

Zoysia does not tolerate wet or poorly drained soil, so clay soils can be an uncharitable growing medium. Grown by seeding, installed as sod, plugs or sprigging in the late spring, Zoysia is one of the most time consuming and expensive turfs to get established. It is also a heavy thatch producer that may cause problems unless controlled, and it can be more difficult to mow due to the tough, dense foliage it produces. Infrequent mowing, mowing too high, frequent watering and over-fertilizing with nitrogen will accelerate thatch accumulation. A good management program will help, but not prevent thatch. Mowing heights recommended for our area are 1.5 to 2.5 inches and can be adjusted depending on turf use and level of maintenance.

Bermuda



The highest used turf grass in the southern States; Bermuda grows in tropical, sub tropical, and the transition zones. It is a low growing, medium to fine texture, light green, warm season turf. In addition to being very durable, heat and drought

resistant, Bermuda requires less water than most other turf types.

Bermuda Habit

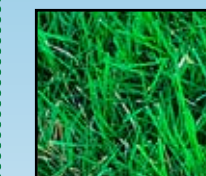
Spreading by creeping stems (stolons and rhizomes) growing above and below ground, Bermuda grows into a dense turf in all types of soils. Known as one of the most persistent and aggressive grasses grown, a healthy, well-managed Bermuda lawn rarely has weed problems, and Bermuda roots reaching

6 feet deep have been recorded in Kansas. In fact, it is very difficult to control, and will invade landscape beds, adjacent lawns of a different type and vegetable gardens but can be controlled by herbicides.

Bermuda Care

Bermuda is a full sun turf and has very poor shade tolerance. It goes dormant in the early fall and greens up in the late spring. Although susceptible to some diseases and a heavy thatch producer, this vigorously growing turf is quick to recover from any damage. Established by seeding or installed as sod, Bermuda is a good choice for a low maintenance lawn. Mowing heights recommended for our area are 1 to 2.5 inches through the growing season, but allow for some leaf growth in the fall to help insulate the root system throughout the winter.

Buffalo



Buffalo grass is a warm season, fine textured, bluish green turf with curly leaves. It is probably our only true native grass used in lawns. Although not widely used for home lawns in our area, Buffalo can create a uniform and attractive turf stand.

Buffalo Habit

This grass has seed producing characteristics and spreads by surface runners called stolons. A low growing turf, Buffalo will show signs of deterioration under excessive traffic and overuse. For this reason Buffalo is usually recommended for low maintenance, low use areas. The grass will turn brown and go dormant during the dry summer months, but recovers well from harsh environmental stress.

Buffalo Care

Buffalo grass has incredible tolerance to prolonged drought and extreme temperatures. It does well in almost any soil type, although it favors heavy clay. Buffalo can be established by seeding, although utilization is sometimes hampered by poor germination of the seed or bur. Establishment by pieces of sod or plugs no less than 2 inches square can yield good results. Plants should be placed 6 to 24 inches apart.

When seeding Buffalo it is a good idea to use treated seed. Treated seed has a much higher germination rate (80% to 90%) than untreated seed (approx. 20%). The best time to seed Buffalo grass is spring to mid summer. Poor germination can be caused by many factors, so the establishment of a good turf stand may take time. Mowing heights recommended for our area are 2 to 4 inches depending on the use and management of the grass.



About the Author

Luke Snow. Luke is the Landscape Maintenance Division Manager at Superior Landscape Management. He has been with Superior for 5 years, has multiple certifications from the Kansas Department of Agriculture including, landscape ornamental, turf and aquatic pest control and over 14 years extensive experience in all aspects of residential and commercial landscape management.