



TURF GRASSES FOR THE INLAND NORTHWEST

There are many different types of grasses suitable for lawn areas in the Inland Northwest. Each thrives in different situations. To minimize lawn problems, choose the type of grass most suited for your site.

First, consider how big your lawn needs to be. Many people, even in arid summer climates like ours, assume that most of their property should be planted into lawn. Lawns require more water, fertilizer and maintenance than other plants. To cut back on water use and lawn chores, reduce the size of your lawn to whatever you and your family need for recreation.

Then, identify the conditions of the area you want planted in lawn. Is it full sun, shaded or some of each? Is it sloped so steeply that watering and mowing will be a problem? Are tree roots going to compete for water and nutrients? Some grass types are more suited to certain conditions than others.

Kentucky bluegrass

Kentucky bluegrass is well-adapted to eastern Washington's soil and climate, but also requires more water and fertilizer than other grasses. It is a grass which should be planted in full sun. Kentucky Bluegrass is slow to germinate but long-lived and it withstands heavy use and heat. If drought stressed, it will lose its characteristic blue green color but will recover when adequate water is supplied.

Perennial ryegrass

Ryegrasses are extremely wear resistant and quick germinating. They make a good combination with Kentucky bluegrasses for sports fields and heavy use areas. Perennial ryegrass prefers full sun and has an attractive dark green color. Its primary drawback is that it is somewhat short-lived (2-3 years).

Fescue

Fine-leaved fescues are popular in home lawns because they start growing early and blend well with turf-type perennial ryegrasses and Kentucky bluegrasses. Most fine fescues are bright green

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and are well-adapted to shade where light intensity is too low for favorable growth of other cool season grasses. They will not withstand heavy use or traffic.

Red, Chewings, and hard fescues comprise the three major groups used for lawns in the Pacific Northwest. They have lower requirements for nitrogen, water, and mowing than turf-type perennial ryegrasses and Kentucky bluegrasses. These are truly low maintenance grasses and are the most drought tolerant of the cool season grasses.

Grasses not suitable for the Inland Northwest

Grasses are not adapted to Washington's climate are bermuda, buffalo, carpet, centipede, mondograss, St. Augustine's, and Zoysia grass.

Bentgrass

Although bentgrass will grow here, do not consider it for a lawn and do not use grass seed mixes containing it. It is a very high maintenance turf grass. In lawns, it turns yellow or brown at the first threat of drying out and when temperatures cool off.

Turf Alternatives

For areas where turf grasses are not needed for recreation, there are many attractive alternatives which will save water, fertilizer and reduce maintenance requirements.

[Ornamental Grasses](#) have a lot going for them. There is an ornamental grass to fit almost every garden spot whether sunny, shady, dry, wet, cool, or hot.

[Native Wildflowers, Groundcovers, and Vines](#) A well-chosen groundcover can provide the same advantages as lawn without high maintenance and water requirements. Adding wildflowers to your site is another way to change difficult planting areas to attractive features in your landscape.

[Groundcovers](#) are low-growing shrubs, perennials or annuals that blanket the ground.

SEEDING RATES FOR NEW LAWNS

Kentucky bluegrass is usually planted at 3 lb./1000 sq. ft. for a home lawn. The most common home lawn mixture is perennial ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass is a 50:50 ratio by seed weight. This equates to 80% Kentucky bluegrass and 20% perennial ryegrass by seed number.

Fine fescue is usually planted at 3 lb./1000 sq. ft. for a home lawn. Two of the most common mixtures of fine fescue, perennial ryegrass, and Kentucky bluegrass planted for home lawns in eastern Washington are: 40% fine fescues + 20% perennial ryegrass + 40% Kentucky bluegrass, and 60% Kentucky bluegrass + 40% fine fescues.

OVERSEEDING RATES FOR LAWN RENOVATION

Overseeding strengthens or reestablishes turfgrass stands in small bare areas, increases density of established turf, or infuses new cultivars or different types of grasses into established turf. Seeding rates per unit area cannot always be specified, but general recommendations are useful.