

# Choosing the Right Turf Grass for Your Ohio Lawn

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Choosing the right grass for your lawn depends on many things including function, aesthetics, sunlight, texture, water needs, maintenance requirements and potential insects and disease problems.

One of the most important requirements is the grass seed's adaptability to temperature. Turf grasses are classified into two groups – cool season and warm season grasses. Cool season turf grass grows best in spring and fall when air temperatures are 60-75 F and soil temperatures are 50-65 F. During the high heat of midsummer, these cool season grasses may become dormant. Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, fine and tall fescues and bent grass are a few examples of cool season grasses.

Warm season grasses grow best when air temperatures are 70-90 F and soil temperatures are 80-95 F. These grasses lack cold tolerance; therefore, during cold seasons these grasses turn brown, dormant and very unattractive. Examples of warm season grasses include zoysia grass, Bermuda grass, Bahia grass and St Augustine grass, all of which grow better in the southern states.

In Ohio, cool seasoned grasses are recommended. Kentucky bluegrass, with proper management, can produce a fine textured, high quality lawn. It requires a moist, well drained soil as well as an abundance of sunlight and regular applications of fertilizer. It does not, however, tolerate shade well.

Perennial rye grass germinates rapidly, usually in 3-10 days. However, since it does not produce rhizomes, it is not as quick to recover from damage as Kentucky bluegrass might. Rye grass can tolerate heavy foot traffic but not drought or extreme cold. Because it germinates quickly, perennial rye grass makes a good choice for areas needing quick cover such as hillsides and high traffic areas.

Tall fescue is coarser in texture than other turf grasses. It is a bunch-type of grass and therefore does not recover quickly from damage. It does have a deep root system which makes it more tolerant to heat and drought. It is also more tolerant of shade than Kentucky bluegrass and perennial rye grass.

The grass most tolerant of shade is Fine fescue which, as the name suggests, is a fine textured species that maintains itself under the conditions of shade, low soil moisture and low fertility. Fine fescues do not do well in hot weather, poorly drained soils and high traffic areas.

Bent grass is an extremely fine textured, cool season perennial grass that will form a high quality turf if managed correctly, but is normally not suitable for lawns because it is too expensive to maintain and too time consuming to manage for the average home owner. Bent grass is primarily used on golf course greens and fairways.

Since each particular type of grass has its pros and cons, the best course of action is a combination of Kentucky bluegrass, rye grass and fescues. When combined correctly, these types of grasses will form a dense turf that is acceptable for most lawns in Ohio and the northern U.S.