

### Perennial Ryegrass

Perennial ryegrass is a cool-season grass and performs best at higher elevations (> 1000 feet). The most common use for perennial ryegrasses is in a mixture with Kentucky bluegrass where the perennial ryegrass component is less than 15 percent by weight. A pure perennial ryegrass lawn is not recommended. Annual (Italian) ryegrass provides rapid germination and fast growth but is suitable only where a temporary turf is desired since it lives for only one year.



### Bermudagrass

A warm-season grass, bermudagrass varies in texture depending on the variety. A bermudagrass turf will go dormant (turn brown) with the first hard frost in the fall and green up in late April to mid-May. Best adapted in the Southern Piedmont and Eastern Virginia, it is not recommended for higher elevations. It can be established from seed, sod, plugs, or sprigs; however, some varieties cannot be seeded and must be established vegetatively.

### Favorable Growing Conditions

- Soil 6 to 8 inches deep that allows good root growth by supplying adequate water and nutrients
- Soil pH of approximately 6.2
- Adequate moisture (1 inch or more water per week)
- Temperatures appropriate to the species selected
- Adequate nutrients
- Appropriate level of sunlight
- Properly adjusted and sharp mower
- Adequate air movement

If any of these conditions are not met on your lawn, corrective action should be taken before attempting to establish turf. If it is difficult to grow turf, consider planting a nonturf ornamental or use some other type of ground cover.



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For more information on selection, planting, cultural practices, and environmental quality, contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension Office. If you want to learn more about horticulture through training and volunteer work, ask your Extension agent about becoming an Extension Master Gardener. For monthly gardening information, subscribe to *The Virginia Gardener Newsletter* by sending your name and address and a check for \$5.00 made out to "Treasurer, Va. Tech" to The Virginia Gardener, Department of Horticulture, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0349. Horticultural information is also now available on the Internet by connecting with Virginia Cooperative Extension's server at <http://www.ext.vt.edu>

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Virginia  
Gardener

## Selecting Turfgrass



Virginia Cooperative Extension



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## Selecting Turfgrass

A quality lawn results from using the right grass species and/or variety, proper planting and establishment, and sound management. Planting the right turfgrass for your site reduces the need for pesticides. The most important step for the homeowner is selecting the proper turfgrass for the situation.

Turfgrasses are perennial, so are expected to live indefinitely with proper management. Because of this, choose carefully from among the various species and varieties for each species. Turfgrasses that provide winter lawn color in most areas of Virginia are known as cool-season grasses. Grasses which go dormant after the first hard frost, and stay brown through the winter months are known as warm-season grasses. The warm-season grasses generally need less maintenance as their water requirements are lower, and their shorter growing season requires fewer mowings per year.

Turfgrass species will not perform equally in the different climates, soils, and management programs that are found throughout Virginia.

### Northern Piedmont/Blue Ridge

For lawns of the Northern Piedmont and areas in and west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the cool-season species, Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue, will produce the best year-round turf on home lawns. Other cool-season turfgrasses used for special purposes are fine leaf fescues (creeping red fescue, hard fescue, chewings fescue, and sheep fescue) and perennial ryegrass. Fine fescues have the best shade tolerance of all the cool-season grasses and are often included in a mixture with various Kentucky bluegrass varieties. Meyer zoysiagrass, a warm-season species, can be used in light shade.

### Southern Piedmont/Eastern Virginia

In the Southern Piedmont and Eastern Virginia, tall fescue is the most commonly used lawngrass. Bermudagrass and zoysiagrass (warm-season grasses) are also adapted. If using bermudagrass, select a winter-hardy cultivar, especially if you live in northern Virginia or in an area with a higher elevation.

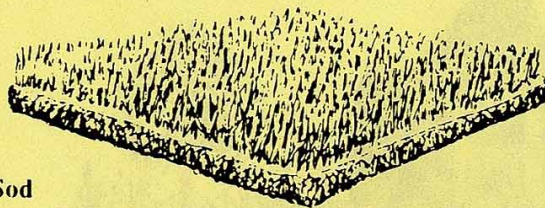
## Purchasing Turfgrass

Turfgrass can be established by seed, sod, sprigs, or plugs, depending on the grass species and variety.



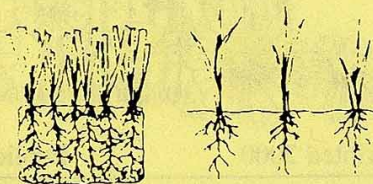
### Certified Seed

The best guarantee of getting the specific variety or varieties of turfgrass is to purchase **CERTIFIED SEED**. It is a guarantee from the seller that you will get the variety of seed named on the label. Certified seed is generally available in 50 pound bags or larger. Some nurseries will sell certified seed in bulk from bins or smaller packages; the certified seed label should still be evident on the package from which seed is dispensed. Avoid purchasing varieties that are not adapted to your area.



### Sod

Sod is rolls or pads of mature grass, cut out of the ground with approximately one-half inch of roots and soil attached. The sod is placed on a prepared soil providing immediate utility. Only high quality, certified sod should be used. Such sod will contain Virginia-Maryland recommended varieties which are free from noxious weeds and excess amounts of other crop or weed plants.



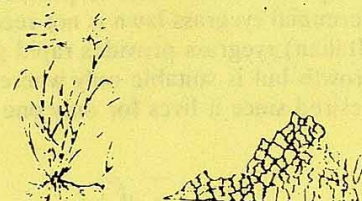
### Plugs and Sprigs

**Plugs** are small cubes of sod approximately 2 inches wide and 2 inches deep. **Sprigs** are stem fragments with young blades of grass and bits of root attached. Be sure to obtain fresh material that is not contaminated with unwanted weeds.

## Turfgrass Varieties

The turfgrass species that do well in the different climatic areas of Virginia are shown as a shaded area of each map.

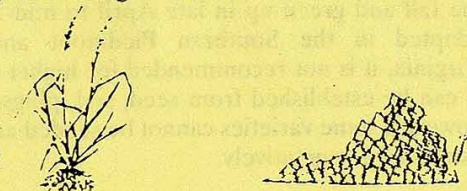
Virginia and Maryland Extension recommendations for turfgrass varieties change annually based on university performance tests. Check with your local Extension agent for the most up-to-date list.



### Kentucky Bluegrass

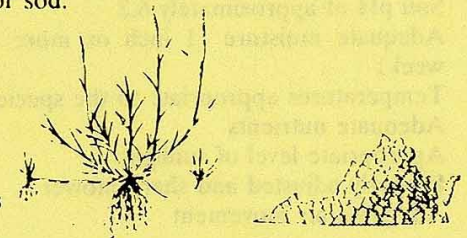
A medium-textured turfgrass, it is best suited to well-drained soils and moderate to high levels of sunlight and management. It is established from seed or sod.

Mixtures or blends of three or four Kentucky bluegrass varieties are recommended in Virginia since they are more likely to provide good quality turf over a wide range of management situations.



### Tall Fescue

A moderately coarse-textured turfgrass, it is tolerant of a wide range of soil types and climatic extremes. Best suited to areas where low to moderate management levels are provided. It is established from seed or sod.



### Zoysiagrass

A warm-season grass of fine to medium texture, it will become dormant (turn brown) with the first hard frost in the fall and green up in late April or mid-May. It is not recommended at higher elevations due to its short growing season. Improved varieties are only available as sprigs or sod.