

Bluegrass, Fescue Best Seeds For Michigan Lawns

For a beautiful lawn, you should be familiar with turf grasses and what best suits your particular soil, site and environment.

Permanent turfgrasses such as Kentucky Bluegrass and Red Fescue should compose a major portion of most seed mixtures planted in Michigan.

Cheap, quick growing sod mixtures are generally a poor buy since they may contain large quantities of temporary and weedy perennial grasses which are unsuited for a high quality, permanent turf.

ONLY QUALITY seeds which meet certain minimum purity and germination percentages should be used. The Michigan Seed Law requires proper labeling for germination, purity, and composition of grass seed mixtures.

However, the buyer is responsible for selecting the properly adapted variety or mixture. Below are some of the permanent lawn grasses meant for lawns in Michigan.

KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS (*Poa pratensis*), the most widely used turfgrass in Michigan, is best adapted to well-drained, heavy fertile soils. It is a perennial, cool season turfgrass having good sod forming characteristics due to its rhizomatous growth habit.

Generally the Kentucky bluegrasses are not adapted to intense shade. There are a number of varieties of Kentucky bluegrass, some having distinctly different management requirements.

It is important to carefully select the variety best suited to the particular management level desired. Kentucky bluegrasses should be mowed at 1-1/2 to 2 inches. Cutting shorter than 1-1/2 inches will seriously weaken the turf.

Kentucky blue grasses are widely used on lawns, athletic fields, institutional grounds, fairways, tees, roadsides, cemeteries and airfields.

COUGAR - is a moderately low growing variety of Kentucky blue grass with a similar leaf texture to Merion. Numerous leaves are oriented horizontally. It tends to have a blue-green color.

It is highly susceptible to leafspot and is moderately susceptible to stripe smut and powdery mildew. Use of this variety in Michigan is suggested only for the northern half of the lower peninsula where leafspot is not a problem.

The outstanding attribute of Cougar is the excellent drought tolerance and drought recovery on sandy soils.

DELTA - This variety of Kentucky blue grass is similar to Kenbu. It is as susceptible to leafspot as Kenbu. Kentucky Bluegrass but recovers from injury much more rapidly.

It is fairly resistant to stem rust and powdery mildew. The variety is outstanding in establishment vigor. Delta can recover from drought fairly quickly. The growth habit of Delta is quite erect.

FYKING - It has a dense, low growing habit of growth of relatively fine leaf texture. Its establishment rate is satisfactory. Fyking is reported to have good resistance to leafspot and stripe smut and a moderate resistance to stem rust. It is moderately susceptible to powdery mildew. Fyking has had only limited testing under Michigan conditions.

KENBU - It has superior early spring and late fall growth and color but becomes dormant in midsummer. This turfgrass is highly susceptible to leafspot diseases which cause severe thinning and browning in early summer.

Although resistant to leaf rust, it is quite susceptible to powdery mildew which can cause severe injury in shaded areas.

Kenbu Kentucky bluegrass withstands traffic moderately well and should be a basic component of a majority of lawn mixtures in Michigan which are to be maintained at a medium to low fertility level.

MERION - This Kentucky bluegrass variety produces a turf of high quality and density when properly managed. It forms a medium textured sod having a wide, dark green leaf. Its chief attribute is resistance to leafspot disease, which results in superior summer growth when compared with Kenbu, Delta, Park, Newport, etc. It is highly susceptible to powdery mildew which can cause severe thinning under intense shade.

Stem rusts are also a problem with Merion but can be overcome by a balanced fertilizer program. Merion is highly susceptible to stripe smut, which is most prevalent under heavy thatch conditions.

ALTHOUGH stripe smut has been found in Michigan, it has not as yet become a severe

a problem as in states to the south.

Merion also shows considerable susceptibility to a new disease which has been called Fusarium blight. With the advent of cool fall weather, Merion shows a reduced growth rate and turns a characteristic purpled-green color.

It demands a high management level compared to most other bluegrass varieties and requires twice the rate of nitrogen fertilization (6-8 of actual nitrogen per 1,000 feet per year).

Merion tends to thatch more than other bluegrasses due to its vigorous, dense growth habit.

NEWPORT - A Kentucky bluegrass variety similar to Merion in growth habit which blends well with Merion. Its main virtue is excellent soil vigor which is desirable for football fields. It is not as vigorous in rhizome production and sod formation.

Newport seems to prefer a medium high nitrogen fertility level. It has a medium rate of establishment. Newport tends to become very stammy at seedhead setting in June.

WINDSOR - Is a dark green, moderately low growing Kentucky bluegrass. It has moderate susceptibility to leafspot, powdery mildew and rust.

BLUEGRASS blends - The blending of several bluegrass varieties which possess varying disease resistant characteristics is preferred. The blend is suited to a broader range of adaptation and disease tolerance than a single variety.

RED FESCUE - Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) is a perennial, cool season turfgrass of fine texture particularly adapted to light, sandy soils, shaded conditions and lower management levels.

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