

Different Types of Grass Seed and Choosing the Best Fit



Whether you're a homeowner needing ways to keep lawns picture perfect, or a farmer wanting to replant grasses to cover bare spots in fields, we all need ways to keep our lawns and properties looking great and ready for whatever comes their way. However, unpredictable weather and high traffic can mean bare and brown spots are inevitable, meaning you must cover them and promote growth by getting the right **grass seed**.

Tractor Supply has many types of seed available, but which is best for your yard or land? We asked Keven Shanks with Scotts Miracle-Grow for his insights on choosing the right type of grass seed.

How to Pick the Right Grass Seed for Your Property

While it can be easy to assume that any grass seed will work, that's not always the case. Different types may work better for your specific yard or property than others. For instance, you'll want to find something that matches or blends well with your existing grass, as various grass types can look different after growing. By getting a grass that works with your yard or field, you can cover up brown spots with ease, camouflaging them with the rest of your grass and working to create a stunning, uniform appearance after it grows in.

Your Local Climate and Weather Conditions

According to Shanks, you must consider the type of weather and climate your area experiences most. In northern climates, you'll need cool-season grasses, which are able to handle the colder temperatures synonymous with the area. On the other hand, if you live in the south, you must have warm-season grasses, which are designed to stay alive even in warm, dry temperatures.

Amount of Sunlight You Receive

To determine the best type of grass seed for your home or land, monitor the area and see how the sun typically hits it throughout the day. If it receives more than six hours of sunlight, then choose a grass type that withstands full sun. If your property gets less than four hours of sunlight, then opt for a shade-tolerant grass, such as **Zoysia grass** or fine **fescue**.

"In the north, sunny and **sun and shade grass seed** mixes will oftentimes contain sun or sun-and-shade-tolerant varieties of Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass and some fine fescue," Shanks says. "Shade mixtures will oftentimes contain shade-tolerant varieties of Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass and more fine fescue."

High-Traffic Areas

If you have little ones, pets or farm animals that are constantly enjoying your grassy areas, consider more durable grass types, such as perennial **ryegrass** or **Kentucky bluegrass**, which also work well for pastures and other farm areas. Other grasses you should think about include:

- **Orchard grass**, which is a popular choice in standard pasture seed mixes
- **Timothy**, which can double as a source of food for your horses)
- **Tall fescue**, which is known to maintain its dark green color year-round

All About Cool-Season Grasses for Northern Areas

As stated before, cool-season grasses are best planted in the north, including New England and the Pacific Northwest. These types of grasses thrive in cooler weather, such as harsh winter snows and milder summers.

"Cool season grass types, including Kentucky Bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, fine fescue and tall fescue, grow best when temperatures are between 60- and 80-degrees Fahrenheit. The grass seed will germinate when soil temperatures are between 50- and 65-degrees Fahrenheit," Shanks says. "Fall is also a great time to plant cool season grasses."

The best types of cool-season grasses include:

Kentucky Bluegrass Seed

Kentucky bluegrass is one of the most common grass types in North America, as it's versatile enough to withstand many conditions, including cooler seasons. It spreads through rhizomes, which are horizontally growing stems underground that store food and allow for asexual reproduction. This creates a uniform sod, producing soft, durable grass that's level and consistent.

Not only is this type of grass incredibly cold hardy, but it's also designed to handle foot traffic from kids running around and playing sports on lawn spaces, as well as curious dogs or livestock wanting to roam. It features a soft texture, which feels more comfortable on bare feet, and the rhizomes allow grasses to recover well after experiencing stress, such as foot traffic or cold weather.

Perennial Ryegrass Seed

Perennial **ryegrass** is another type of cool-season grass, but can also be used during the winter in southern states, and works well in permanent lawns or pastures. What's unique about this type of grass is that while it may go dormant during winter, it'll return when spring comes back around. It's also a fast-growing grass seed, usually ready for mowing around 21 days after seeding, and can be mixed with other grasses to give properties a full, healthy appearance.

Another unique aspect about perennial ryegrass is that it's designed to resist diseases and pests, meaning it requires less maintenance than other types. Be sure to pay attention to the type of ryegrass you select, as it's available in perennial and annual options. Annual ryegrasses won't grow back and will die out after the season ends. So, when you need short-term grass coverage, an annual ryegrass may be better.

Fine and Tall Fescue Grass Seed

If you're looking for a more **shade-tolerant** grass, plant some **fescue**, which can come in many types. For cool seasons, consider fine and tall fescue grasses. Fine fescue works well on standard lawns and can handle low light and a lot of shade from trees. While it may not be great for lawns that see much foot traffic, it does thrive in more challenging **soil** conditions, such as clay, rocky or sandy soils, and is drought tolerant.

Tall fescue, on the other hand, is a little more adaptable, offering tolerance in both cold and warm weather. While this grass also has rhizomes, similar to Kentucky bluegrass, it actually spreads around lawns through tillers, which are vertical shoots found at the plant's base. Tall fescue is also drought tolerant and works well on shaded lawns and pastures, and it is better at handling foot traffic.

All About Warm-Season Grasses for Southern Climates

If you live in an area that experiences harsh, hot summers and mild winters, anywhere from Florida to California, opt for a warm-season grass to spruce up your land. These types of grasses can withstand long periods of heat and drought, ensuring properties look healthy and green even when experiencing hot, dry weather.

These grasses grow best when temperatures hit 75 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit, using the warmer weather to establish deep root systems and enhance resiliency. "The grass seed will germinate when soil temperatures are between 65- and 70-degrees Fahrenheit," Shanks says. "So, the best time to plant warm-season grass types is from late spring (after the last frost date) through early summer."

There are many types of warm-season grasses to choose from, including:

St. Augustine Grass

According to Shanks, St. Augustine grass is "planted primarily using sod, plugs or sprigs," as it spreads through creeping stolons, which have an easier time establishing when planted with these materials. If your property is a little more shaded, St. Augustine grass is a great choice, as it's more shade-tolerant than other types. It's also salt-tolerant, making it great for beachy, coastal homes.

Floritam is a popular type of St. Augustine grass, which is not as resistant to the cold but resists chinch bugs well.

Bermuda Seed

Bermuda grass is the type of grass you see on golf courses, sports fields and lawns across southern states, offering excellent drought and heat tolerance, and recovering easily from regular wear and tear. It requires **full sun** to grow, meaning if your yard sees a lot of sun, this is your ideal grass type. Bermuda grass can grow in most **soils**, even sandy and clay ones, and it is the fastest-growing warm-season grass you can buy.

Centipede Grass

Centipede grass gets its name from its growth pattern, which grows grasses in tight, carpet-like configurations to give you a luscious, full-looking lawn. While this type of grass can withstand some shade, it will still need around six to seven hours of full sun. This is more of a slow-growing grass, but it'll also require less maintenance and mowing. This is because its thick leaves prevent weeds from taking root, and grasses grow slow and close to the ground.

Zoysia Grass

Zoysia grass is similar to centipede grass in the way it grows and is used, growing grass in carpet-like patterns and being a popular option for landscapes and golf courses. Just like centipede grass, this type of grass requires mostly full sun to grow, and it can withstand a little shade. But what makes zoysia grass so unique is its ability to stay hydrated in dry conditions, taking water from deep soil layers to thrive even when your area experiences less rainfall.

Planting Grasses in the Transition Zone

Not everyone falls perfectly into warm-season and cool-season climates, and many Americans live in what we call the transition zone. "Both cool- and warm-season grasses can be found growing in the transition zone," says Shanks. This area includes all states in the mid-south, which experience a combination of both warm and cold weather. Because of this, you'll need both a cool- and warm-season grass type, one that's capable of withstanding a variety of weather conditions.

According to Shanks, the best grasses to grow in these areas include **Kentucky bluegrass**, perennial **ryegrass** and tall **fescue**. While mostly categorized as cool-season grasses, they still come with special characteristics that allow them to make it through hot, sunny weather.

Find Grass Seed and Lawn Care Supplies at Tractor Supply

From **lawn mowing** to **fertilizing** to weeding, there's a lot that goes into keep lawns beautiful and healthy all year-round. Luckily, we make Life Out Here a little easier by providing all the **lawn care tools** you need in-store and online. To learn more about what we offer, visit your **local Tractor Supply store** today or browse online.