

What is a fine fescue?

Fine fescues are a group of narrow-bladed cool-season turfgrasses with several benefits:

- They require less mowing, watering, and fertilizer
- They are more shade tolerant than other cool-season turfgrasses
- They are adapted to a majority of growing conditions in Minnesota

PLANTING A FINE FESCUE LAWN



Which fine fescue?

The most commonly used fine fescues in Minnesota are hard fescue, Chewings fescue, and strong creeping red fescue.

For a full-sun area, use a mixture of 40% hard fescue, 40% Chewings fescue, and 20% strong creeping red fescue.

For a shady lawn, use 40% Chewings, 40% strong creeping red, and 20% hard fescue.

Seeding

There are two ways to start a fine fescue lawn from seed:

1. Seed between August 15 and September 15
2. Dormant seed in mid November

Approximately 3-6 pounds of seed are required to cover 1000 ft², and fine fescues generally take about 5-12 days to germinate with warmer soils.

Establishing

Starter fertilizer should be used at seeding unless dormant seeding. A range of 0.25-1 pound of nitrogen for 1000 ft² applied within the first two months of emergence will help the young stand fill in well.

Begin mowing once the seedlings reach about 2.5 or 3 inches.

Mowing

Fine fescues should be mowed at a height of between 2.5-4 inches.

- Avoid removing more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the leaf blade in a single mowing
- Leave clippings on the ground to return nutrients to soil
- Don't mow during excessive heat or drought conditions!

Maintenance Fertilizing

Fine fescues require less fertilizer than many other turfgrasses grown in Minnesota. Unless your soil is deficient in phosphorus, established fine fescues will not benefit from phosphorus fertilizer.

Nitrogen fertilizer should be applied 1-2 times per year, at a rate of 0.5-2 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 ft² annually. The best time for application is late August through early October.

Controlling Weeds

The best way to control weeds is raising the height of your mower blade and applying appropriate amounts of fertilizer. Hand-pulling small patches of weeds is an option, but if weeds become overwhelming and an herbicide is necessary, be sure to follow all instructions on the product label. Remember, a healthy lawn is the best defense against weeds!

Watering

Seeding: Fine fescues require the most water in the 2 weeks after they are seeded. New seeds need to be lightly watered 3-4 times a day until they have germinated. After germination the young stand may need to be watered 1-2 times each day for a few weeks so that the young plants do not dry out.

Maintenance: Fine fescues require significantly less water than most other turfgrass species. In fact, they can go up to four weeks without rain. After four weeks, they may need about 0.5 inches of water to keep their crowns alive.



For more information

Visit the UMN Extension website:
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