PUBLICATION **8035**

Turfgrass Selection for the Home Landscape

M. ALI HARIVANDI, UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara Counties; **VICTOR A. GIBEAULT,** UCCE Environmental Horticulturist, Riverside County; **MICHAEL J. HENRY,** UCCE Farm Advisor, Orange and Riverside Counties; **LIN WU,** Professor, Department of Environmental Horticulture, University of California, Davis; **PAMELA M. GEISEL,** UCCE Farm Advisor, Environmental Horticulture, Fresno County; **CAROLYN L. UNRUH,** Staff Writer, UCCE, Fresno County.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources
http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu

Successful selection of a turfgrass requires knowing how the turf will be used, where it will be grown, and what level of quality is desired. It is also important to know how much time and effort will be dedicated to installing and maintaining the turf. If very high quality is desired, a lot of time and effort will be required. The positive and negative characteristics of each species of turfgrass must be evaluated in order to choose the one best suited to a particular situation.

The lists below rank common turfgrasses according to important characteristics and cultural requirements. Within a category, a given grass may differ little from the one listed immediately above or below it; it may, however, differ greatly from one further up or down on the list. The position of a particular turfgrass in a list may change slightly as more is learned about it. Some characteristics of an improved variety may be substantially different than the original species. Its position is also affected by the climate and microclimate at the intended location of establishment. The general ranking (high, low, or intermediate) of turf varieties can be very useful in the selection process.

The warm-season turfgrasses usually lose their green color and are dormant in winter if the average air temperature drops below 50° to 60°F. Some may die if exposed to subfreezing temperatures for extended periods.

The cool-season turfgrasses do not ordinarily lose their green color unless the average air temperature drops below 32°F for an extended period. They turn green again as soon as temperatures rise above freezing and are not usually damaged by subfreezing temperatures.

UC PEER REVIEWED

Types of Turfgrass

Common name (Grasses listed in **bold type** are more appropriate for the home lawn.)	**Scientific name**
Annual ryegrass*	*Lolium multiflorum*
Bermudagrass (common)	*Cynodon dactylon*
Bermudagrass (hybrid)	*Cynodon* spp.
Colonial bentgrass	*Agrostis tenuis*
Creeping bentgrass	*Agrostis palustris*
Dichondra**	*Dichondra micrantha*
Highland bentgrass	*Agrostis* spp. Cv "Highland"
Kentucky bluegrass	*Poa pratensis*
Kikuyugrass	*Pennisetum clandestinum*
Perennial ryegrass	*Lolium perenne*
Red fescue	*Festuca rubra*
St. Augustinegrass	*Stenotaphrum secundatum*
Tall fescue	*Festuca arundinacea*
Zoysiagrass	*Zoysia* spp.

*Annual ryegrass is inferior in generally recognized turfgrass characteristics; therefore, it is not ranked here with other turfgrass species. It is, however, commonly used to overseed winter-dormant, warm-season turfgrasses, or where a temporary vegetative cover is needed.

**Although considered a perennial broadleaf and not a true grass, dichondra can be maintained as a lawn in regions where warm season turfgrasses are adapted.

Grasses are shown grouped together if they are at the same level of suitability in a particular category.

Texture (leaf-blade width)

Coarse (broad)

- Dichondra
- St. Augustinegrass
- Kikuyugrass
- Zoysiagrass
- Tall fescue
- Common bermudagrass
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Perennial ryegrass
- Highland bentgrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Creeping bentgrass
- Red fescue

Fine (narrow)

Heat Tolerance

High

- Zoysiagrass
- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Common bermudagrass
- St. Augustinegrass
- Kikuyugrass
- Tall fescue
- Dichondra
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Creeping bentgrass
- Highland bentgrass
- Perennial ryegrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Red fescue

Low

Cold Tolerance (winter color persistence)

High

- Kentucky bluegrass
- Red fescue
- Creeping bentgrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Highland bentgrass
- Perennial ryegrass
- Tall fescue
- Dichondra
- Zoysiagrass
- Kikuyugrass
- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Common bermudagrass
- St. Augustinegrass

Low

Salinity Tolerance

High

- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Zoysiagrass
- St. Augustinegrass
- Common bermudagrass
- Kikuyugrass
- Creeping bentgrass
- Tall fescue
- Perennial ryegrass
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Red fescue
- Highland bentgrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Dichondra

Low

Mowing Height Adaptation

High cut

- Tall fescue
- Red fescue
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Perennial ryegrass
- St. Augustinegrass
- Common bermudagrass
- Zoysiagrass
- Dichondra
- Kikuyugrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Highland bentgrass
- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Creeping bentgrass

Low cut

Drought Tolerance

High

- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Zoysiagrass
- Common bermudagrass
- St. Augustinegrass
- Kikuyugrass
- Tall fescue
- Red fescue
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Perennial ryegrass
- Highland bentgrass
- Creeping bentgrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Dichondra

Low

Nitrogen Requirement

High

- Creeping bentgrass
- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Dichondra
- Perennial ryegrass
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Highland bentgrass
- Tall fescue
- Common bermudagrass
- St. Augustinegrass
- Red fescue
- Zoysiagrass
- Kikuyugrass

Low

Disease Incidence

High

- Dichondra
- Creeping bentgrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Highland bentgrass
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Red fescue
- Perennial ryegrass
- St. Augustinegrass
- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Tall fescue
- Zoysiagrass
- Common bermudagrass
- Kikuyugrass

Low

Shade Tolerance

High (shade)

- Red fescue
- St. Augustinegrass
- Zoysiagrass
- Dichondra
- Kikuyugrass
- Creeping bentgrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Highland bentgrass
- Tall fescue
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Perennial ryegrass
- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Common bermudagrass

Low (sun)

Recovery from Severe Injury

Complete

- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Kikuyugrass
- Common bermudagrass
- Zoysiagrass
- Creeping bentgrass
- Highland bentgrass
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Dichondra
- St. Augustinegrass
- Tall fescue
- Perennial ryegrass
- Red fescue
- Colonial bentgrass

Partial

Wear Resistance

High

- Zoysiagrass
- Kikuyugrass
- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Tall fescue
- Common bermudagrass
- Perennial ryegrass
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Red fescue
- St. Augustinegrass
- Highland bentgrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Creeping bentgrass
- Dichondra

Low

Establishment Rate

Fast

- Perennial ryegrass
- Tall fescue
- Common bermudagrass
- Dichondra
- Highland bentgrass
- Colonial bentgrass
- Creeping bentgrass
- Kentucky bluegrass
- Hybrid bermudagrass
- Kikuyugrass
- Red fescue
- St. Augustinegrass
- Zoysiagrass

Slow

Recovery from Moderate Wear	Maintenance Cost and Effort*
Fast	**High**
Hybrid bermudagrass	Creeping bentgrass
Kikuyugrass	Dichondra
Common bermudagrass	Hybrid bermudagrass
Tall fescue	Kentucky bluegrass
Perennial ryegrass	Colonial bentgrass
St. Augustinegrass	Perennial ryegrass
Kentucky bluegrass	St. Augustinegrass
Dichondra	Highland bentgrass
Highland bentgrass	Zoysiagrass
Creeping bentgrass	Tall fescue
Red fescue	Common bermudagrass
Zoysiagrass	Kikuyugrass
Colonial bentgrass	
Slow	**Low**

*Red fescue is not included here due to its limited use.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You'll find detailed information on many aspects of turfgrass management in these titles and in other publications, slide sets, and videos from UC ANR:

UC IPM Pest Management Guidelines: Turfgrass, Publication 3365-T

Managing Turfgrasses during Drought, Publication 21499

Diseases and Pests of Turfgrass: Identification and Control, Slide Set 93/102

UC IPM Pest Notes online at http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu

To order these and other products, visit our online catalog at http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu. You can also place orders by mail, phone, or fax, or request a printed catalog of publications, slide sets, and videos from

University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources
Communication Services
6701 San Pablo Avenue, 2nd Floor
Oakland, CA 94608-1239

Telephone: (800) 994-8849 or (510) 642-2431
FAX: (510) 643-5470

E-mail inquiries: danrcs@ucdavis.edu

An electronic version of this publication is available on the ANR Communication Services website at http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu.

Publication 8035

This publication was funded in part by the Elvenia J. Slosson Fund.

This publication is a revised edition of *Selecting the Best Turfgrass* by M. Ali Harivandi, William B. Davis, Victor A. Gibeault, Michael J. Henry, John A. Van Dam, Lin Wu, and Victor B. Youngner, ANR Leaflet 2589, 1990.

pr-09/01-GM/VFG ISBN 978-1-60107-213-9

UC PEER REVIEWED

This publication has been anonymously peer reviewed for technical accuracy by University of California scientists and other qualified professionals. This review process was managed by the ANR Associate Editor for Environmental Horticulture.