

Grass Choices



In Colorado Springs' semi-arid climate, many grasses need a lot of supplemental irrigation to stay lush and green. To select the best grass for your location and needs, it's best to understand a little about each grass in general.

	Kentucky Blue Grass	Turf-type Tall Fescue	Fine Fescue	Blue Grama	Buffalograss
Water Requirement					
Average supplemental irrigation required to maintain quality appearance (April through Oct.)	25 inches	20-30 inches. Less required on amended soil tilled 7-8 inches deep. More required on shallow soil.	18-20 inches	8-10 inches	8-10 inches
Monthly winter watering required? (Nov. through March)	Yes			No	
Ability to survive without supplemental water during growing	Good	Poor	Fair	Excellent	Excellent
More frequent irrigation required during establishment?	Yes, during first growing season.				
Appearance					
Color during growing season	Dark green	Dark green	Dark green to blue, depending on species	Soft blue-green	Soft blue-green
Turf density	Excellent	Good	Good	Fair	Good
Green period of active growth	April through Nov.	April through Oct.	April through Nov.	Mid-May through mid-Oct.	Mid-May through mid-Oct.
Looks like a traditional lawn	Yes	Yes, but individual grass blades are wider than Kentucky Bluegrass.	Somewhat. More floppy than traditional grass and blades are thinner.	No, thinner and more clumpy than traditional lawn.	Newer cultivars are denser and more green than older cultivars.
Height if left unmowed	Requires mowing	Requires mowing	6-12 inches	10-16 inches	3-6 inches

Water efficiency videos are online at youtube.com/springsutilities.



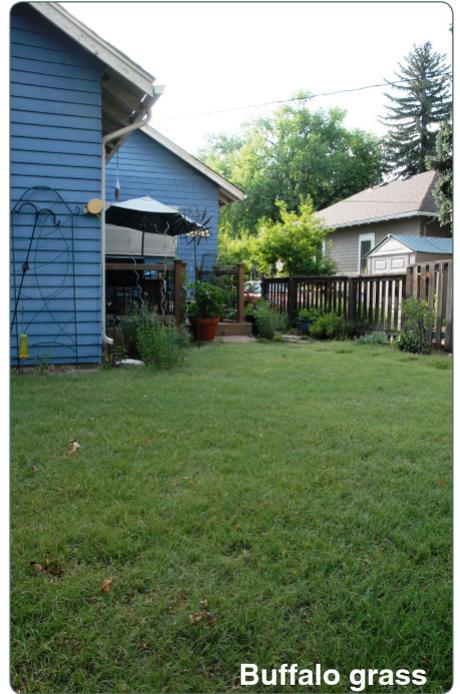
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	Kentucky Blue Grass	Turf-type Tall Fescue	Fine Fescue	Blue Grama	Buffalograss
Best Location					
Traffic tolerance	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Fair
Shade tolerance	Fair	Fair	Excellent	Poor	Poor
Elevation limit	Works well at high elevation in sunny areas.	Not suggested with persistent snow cover since it's susceptible to snow mold damage.	Grows very well at high elevations. Performs best during cool summers.	Doesn't grow well above 7,000 feet due to short growing season.	Up to 6,500 feet, but can be grown up to 7,000 feet in elevation in sunny, protected sites
Soil limitations	Soil amendment and tilling required before seeding or sodding.	Performs best on deep, well-drained soils with added soil amendment.	Doesn't perform well on shallow, compacted soils. Tolerates clay, sandy and rocky soils.	Works well on most soil types.	Doesn't grow well in very sandy or rocky soil. Needs some clay content to grow well.
Growth Habits					
Native to Colorado?	No		No, except sheep fescue	Yes	
Sod former or bunchgrass?	Sod former	Bunchgrass	Bunchgrass	Bunchgrass	Sod former
Root depth on unstricted soil	12 inches	3 feet	12-18 inches	6 feet	8 feet
Care Requirements					
Mowing	Once or twice per week		Once every two weeks	Once every two weeks or less	Once every two weeks or less
Optimal mowing height	3 inches	3 inches	2-3 inches	2-3 inches	2 inches
Fertilization per growing season	3-4 lbs. nitrogen	3-4 lbs. nitrogen	1-2 lbs. nitrogen	1-2 lbs. nitrogen	1-2 lbs. nitrogen
Insect or disease problems	Occasional	Rare	Occasional	Rare	Extremely rare
Establishment					
Establishment method	Sod or seed	Sod or seed	Seed	Seed	Sod or plugs
Best time to seed, sod or plug	April 15 through June 15 or Aug. 15 through Sept. 15		Aug. 15 through Sept. 30	June 1 through Aug. 15	June 1 through Aug. 15

	Kentucky Blue Grass	Turf-type Tall Fescue	Fine Fescue	Blue Grama	Buffalograss
Other considerations					
Most common complaint	Takes a lot of water to keep green in hot, dry years. Brown spots appear in hot or dry periods. Winter-kill is common if sited in exposed location or if not winter watered routinely.	Grass blades can be tough, requiring frequent mower blade sharpening or blade tip shredding will occur.	Not heat tolerant. Will turn brown above 90 degrees if it's in a sunny location.	Weed invasion	Weed invasion
Recommended cultivars	Visit www.ext.colostate.edu/mg/Gardennotes/562.html for recommendations from the Colorado State University Extension.		Hard fescue is best suited for local lawns since it's darker green and more heat tolerant than other fescues. Sheeps fescue is good for naturalized areas.	Visit www.ext.colostate.edu/mg/Gardennotes/562.html for recommendations from the Colorado State University Extension.	Lovington, Hachita
Comments	Excellent choice for high traffic areas. Site it in a flat, sunny area. Use high-efficiency sprinklers.	Great choice for a low maintenance lawn if the soil is amended and tilled 8-18 in. deep. Not a great choice if the soil is shallow or compacted.	Use in shady locations. Sheeps fescue and hard fescue are best choices for local climate. Sheeps fescue has a blue color, hard fescue is more green and is well suited to creating lawns.	Great for low maintenance, peripheral areas. Good for sites with sandy soil. One of the best water-conserving options available.	Good choice for a water-conserving lawn, but requires some clay content in soil and a site under 6,500 feet in elevation.



Fine fescue



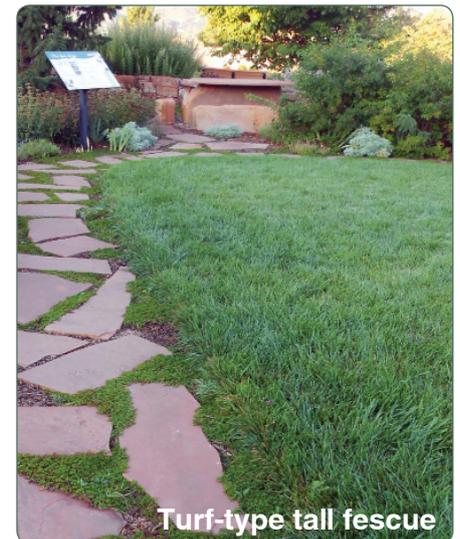
Buffalo grass



Kentucky blue grass



Blue grama



Turf-type tall fescue