SELECTION OF FAIRWAY GRASSES FOR NEW GOLF COURSES

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There are no panacea fairway grasses for Kentucky's transitional climatic zone. The required fairway height of one inch or less, cold winter temperatures, hot muggy summers, high irrigation requirements and cost of establishment limits the use of many of our grasses for fairways. The following comments for each of the grasses may help you select the right grass for golf course fairways in Kentucky.

BERMUDAGRASS

Advantages

• aggressive divot fill-in during summer months
• establishment takes 6-8 weeks
• can be mowed between ½ to 1" height
• requires minimum maintenance irrigation
• few pest problems
• can allow summer cart traffic

Disadvantages

• can be sprigged/vegetatively established or seeded
• dormant/brown from October through mid-April
• winter-kill potential, especially in high traffic and poorly drained areas, and first year seeded bermuda
• will not grow in shady areas
• requires heavy irrigation for 2-3 weeks after sprigging
• less adapted to northern Kentucky
• some Spring Dead Spot disease problems

Planting Date

• sprigging mid-May through mid-July
• seeding mid-May through June

Planting Rate

• 500 to 800 bushels of sprigs/acre
• 40# seed/acre

Varieties

• Quickstand and Midlawn - most winter hardy vegetative varieties
• Riviera, Yukon, Princess, Savannah - best seeded varieties

Note: For latest recommended cultivars for each species, check "Top Varieties" on the webpage at: www.uky.edu/ag/ukturf

CREEPING BENTGRASS

Advantages

• relatively fast establishment rate
• best at mowing heights of ½ inch or less
• spreads laterally to fill-in divots
• excellent shade tolerance

Disadvantages
• best maintained with light-weight mowers and clippings removed
• requires disease control program
• requires excellent irrigation system and much water
• must not allow heavy cart traffic on fairways, especially when soil moisture is limited
Seeding Date
• best mid-August to October, 2nd best February 15 - March 30
Seeding Rate
• 40#/acre (equivalent to 51 seed/sq. in.)
Varieties
• L-93, Truline, Penn G-6, SR 1119, Penneagle, Golf Star

KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS
Advantages
• spreads laterally to fill-in divots
• easily renovated with perennial ryegrass
• moderate shade tolerance
Disadvantages
• very weak grass at heights of 1" or less
• slow establishment rate
• difficult to renovate by slit seeding more bluegrass
• poor traffic tolerance
• severe problems with white grubs
• hot-weather patch diseases very costly and difficult to control
• less adapted to western Kentucky
• *Poa annua* invasion can be severe
Seeding Date
• must be seeded between mid-August to mid-September
• seeding at other times is highly unpredictable due to heat, cold or weeds
Seeding Rate
• 60-80#/Acre (approx. 25 seed/sq. in.)
Varieties
• Only used improved varieties such as Total Eclipse, Midnight, NuGlade, Quantum Leap, Liberator, Award, etc.
Blend/Mixtures
• Two or more of the improved bluegrass varieties can be blended together. If needed for rapid establishment/erosion control, include recommended perennial ryegrass at no more than 15-20% by weight (maximum of 10 to 15 lbs perennial ryegrass per acre). If too much ryegrass is used, the bluegrass will not establish.

PERENNIAL RYEGRASS
Advantages
• quick establishment
• can be mowed between ½" and 1" height
• moderate shade tolerance
• easily improved by renovation with other perennial ryegrass varieties

• very good traffic tolerance

Disadvantages

• fairway disease control program often necessary, especially for Gray Leaf Spot disease
• must be irrigated during severe drought/heat
• turf tends to thin-out during summer months
• a bunch-type grass that does not fill-in divots
• almost impossible to interseed successfully with grasses other than ryegrass

Planting Date

• best in mid-August through mid-October, next best from mid-February through mid-April; with proper irrigation, disease and weed control, perennial ryegrass may be established throughout spring and summer

Seeding Rate

• 175-250#/Acre (7 seed/sq. in.)

Varieties

• Use improved turf types such as Repel III, Radiant, Ascend, Majesty, Legacy II, Pennant II, Line Drive, Manhattan 3, Panther, Imagine, Brightstar II, Premier II, etc.

Blends/Mistures

• Can blend two or more of the improved varieties

TALL FESCUE

Advantages

• relatively fast establishment rate
• fairly easy to renovate with additional tall fescue
• few pest problems
• good shade tolerance
• good traffic tolerance

Disadvantages

• will generally not survive mowing height of 1 inch or less
• a bunch-type grass that does not fill in divots
• Brown Patch Disease can be major summer problem

Seeding Date

• best in mid-August through mid-October, 2nd best from February 15 - March 15

Seeding Rate

• 250-300#/Acre (9 seed/sq. in.)

Varieties

• Rembrandt, Masterpiece, Millennium, Plantation, Barrera, Kickoff, Durana, Barrington, Jaguar 3, etc.

Blend/Mixtures

• can blend two or more of the improved varieties
• should not use mixture of tall fescue with perennial ryegrass

Planting Date

• mid-May through mid-July

Planting Rate

• 500 - 800 bushels of sprigs/Acre, strip sod 4" strips, no more than 1' apart

Variety

• Meyer

• Varieties such as El Toro are faster to establish than Meyer but have less winter hardiness

ZOYSIA

Advantages

• lowest maintenance requirement of all grasses
• best when mowed at 3/4 inches or higher
• few pest problems
• requires minimum maintenance irrigation
• excellent heat and cold tolerance
• can allow cart traffic

Disadvantages

• must be sodded or strip sodded. New seeded cultivars are extremely slow and difficult to establish. Sprigged zoysia is seldom successful
• very slow establishment rate
• slow divot fill-in
• must limit thatch build-up
• brown/dormant from October through mid-April
• poor shade tolerance
• most costly grass to establish
• often invaded by common bermudagrass