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# Choosing the Right Type of Grass for Your Lawn

When selecting lawn seed, here are some key factors to consider.

- Is the area where the seed will be planted mostly in the sun or mostly in the shade? Many types of turf grass do not perform very well in the shade.
- How much is the area used? If there is a lot of foot traffic, you'll want to select a variety that can cope with it. Otherwise, bare areas will develop.
- How much water am I willing and able to give my lawn? Proper water management involves watering less often, more deeply, instead of applying less water more frequently.
- How much fertilizer am I willing and able to apply over time? Using a mulching mower can decrease the need for fertilization, but some grasses look better and are more competitive with weeds if they are fertilized periodically.

Consider the following options and turfgrass characteristics to help you choose the right type of grass for your lawn.

Traditional Lawns	Sun/shade	Tolerance to foot traffic	Irrigation needs during growing season	Fertilizer needs
Kentucky bluegrass	Sun/partial shade	High tolerance	1-2+ inches per week	High
Tall fescue	Sun/partial shade	Moderate-high tolerance	1-2 inches every 2 weeks	Moderate
Fine fescues	Sun/full shade	Low-moderate tolerance	1-2 inches per month	Low

Low maintenance/native lawns	Sun/shade	Tolerance to foot traffic	Irrigation needs during growing season	Fertilizer needs
Buffalograss	Sun/partial shade	Low tolerance	1 inch per month during hot dry periods	Low
Blue grama	Sun/partial shade	Does not tolerate high foot traffic	1 inch per month during hot dry periods	Low
Streambank wheatgrass	Sun/partial shade	Moderate-high tolerance	1 inch per month during hot dry periods	Low



Once you've chosen what type of grass you'd like to grow, it's time to determine how much seed you'll need.

First, measure the area to be seeded. Check the seed bag (or other source, such as the nursery where you purchased the seed) to see how much seed is recommended per 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of area. Then, calculate how many bags or pounds of seed are needed.

Seed calculation example: Backyard measures 80 ft x 100 ft = 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. 4 pounds of seed/1,000 ft<sup>2</sup> is recommended. 4 pounds x 8 = 32 lbs seed needed.

## SEEDING RATES FOR TURFGRASS

### *Traditional Lawns*

#### **Kentucky bluegrass, Kentucky bluegrass/perennial ryegrass mix, tall fescue, fine fescue mix**

- Apply 4–8 pounds of seed per 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>.
- Alternatives to seeded lawns are sod and plugs. These may be more expensive than seed but can produce a lawn more quickly and reduce the need to control weeds.

### *Native/Drought-tolerant Grasses*

#### **Buffalograss**

- Select varieties known to produce desirable lawns from seed. Some buffalograss varieties include 'Bison', 'Bowie', 'Cody', 'Plains', and 'Topgun'.
- Apply 3–5 pounds of seed per 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>.
- Buffalograss lawns stay dormant longer than Kentucky bluegrass and won't green up until the weather is quite warm.
- Buffalograss can be harder to get started from seed with more time spent on weed control. Once established, if vigorous, plants can invade planting beds.
- Other options for planting buffalograss include plugs or sod. Vegetative plantings are more expensive than seed, but can produce a lawn more quickly



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and reduce weeds compared to seeded buffalograss lawn. Vegetative varieties suitable for Wyoming include 'Legacy'.

- For a list of buffalograss varieties recommended for locations below 6,500 ft elevation, check out this resource from Colorado State University Extension: <https://bit.ly/csu-buffalo-grass>.

#### **Blue Grama**

- 'Hachita' blue grama grass seed is a desirable turfgrass option because its seeds germinate quickly and it forms a dense turf.
- Blue grama is a bunch grass. Lawns can become "gappy" looking when mowed as bare areas develop around clumps of grass.
- Apply 4 pounds of seed per 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>.
- Seeds germinate best in late spring-early summer when nighttime temperatures are near 60°F.
- Vegetative plugs are available for planting blue grama lawns. Vegetative plantings are more expensive than seed, but can produce a lawn more quickly and reduce weeds compared to seeded blue grama lawns.

#### **Streambank Wheatgrass**

- 'Sodar' streambank wheatgrass is a native, drought-tolerant, sod-forming grass that can produce a desirable lawn even at high elevations.
- Apply 3–5 pounds of seed per 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>.
- Streambank wheatgrass is often used for erosion control because of its quick germination and vigorous growth. It quickly establishes a dense lawn.

Questions? Visit <https://bit.ly/uwe-counties> to contact a local UW Extension office.

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