



## **Different species of plant suitable for a variety of lawns**

If you are setting out to produce a new lawn, it is important to look at the different species of plant which are suitable, and make the right choice at the outset.

Most existing lawns are deliberate or accidental mixtures of different types of grasses. A single species seldom makes a good lawn. It is almost impossible to keep indigenous or volunteer grasses from creeping into any lawn and they will be particularly noticeable and create an ugly focal point in turf made from only one species of grass.

In practice, seed mixtures of two or more compatible grasses are usually sown to produce a tightly-knit turf that prevents invasion from weeds and other grasses.

The individual grasses in the mixtures are chosen to complement each other in growth habit and disease susceptibility. Fescues and bents are ideal companions because both stand up well to repeated close cutting and are slower to germinate and grow than rye and meadow-grasses. Each group also serves a different purpose; fescues and bents are ideal dwarf growing grasses for fine turf areas.

Beware of seed mixtures consisting of too many species and cultivars, which are only included on the principle that some will survive and prove suitable. If too many species are sown, some will never come up and the turf is apt to be patchy in colour and texture; the desirable, slower growing, non-aggressive species tend to be smothered by the coarser, broad-leaved but more aggressive types.

Choice of mixture is governed by the type of lawn required and the suitability of grasses for local soils and conditions. For example:

Hard Wearing and utility use - **Perennial rye grass**

Fine Lawns – **chewings fescue and brown top bent**

Drought resistance and light textured soils - **smooth stalked meadow grass**  
**chewings fescue**  
**creeping red fescue**

Heavy textured soils - **perennial rye grass and rough stalked meadow grass**

Damp and shade areas and under trees - **wood meadow grass**  
**rough stalked meadow grass**  
**velvet bent**



### **Species suited to organically-managed fine turf grass**

Fine-leaved grasses have the ability to produce uniform growth of superb appearance and colour; they offer excellent persistency even under close and frequent mowing. An ideal mixture for most soil types is:

- 80 per cent chewings fescue (*Festuca rubra*)
- 20 per cent brown top bent (*Agrostis capillaris*)



**chewings fescue**



**brown top bent**

### **Species suited to lawns with minimal intervention, where some wildflowers/weeds are tolerated**

**General purpose** - for turf which does not need excessive mowing, looks its best under constant use and keeps its colour for most of the year, use:

- 30 per cent perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*)
- 40 per cent smooth stalked meadow grass (*Poa pratensis*)
- 10 per cent brown top bent (*Agrostis capillaris*)
- 20 per cent creeping (*Festuca rubra rubra*) or chewings fescue (*Festuca rubra commutata*)



**perennial rye grass**



**smooth stalked meadow grass**



**brown top bent**



**chewings fescue**

**Hard-wearing** – for utility lawns which are dense, compact and richly coloured turf for good wear and persistency, use:

55 per cent perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*)

45 per cent smooth-stalked meadow grass (*Poa pratensis*)



**perennial rye grass**



**smooth stalked meadow grass**

**Drought resistance** - for lighter soils and low rainfall areas, a mixture with good resistance to drought is essential; it should contain a greater proportion of rhizomatous grasses and cultivars able to withstand wear:

20 per cent chewings fescue (*Festuca rubra commutata*)

45 per cent red or creeping fescue (*Festuca rubra subsp. Rubra*)

25 per cent smooth stalked meadow grass (*Poa pratensis*)

10 per cent brown top bent (*Agrostis capillaris*)



**chewing fescue**



**creeping red fescue**



**smooth stalked meadow grass**



**brown top bent**

**Shade areas** - for particularly shaded situations on most types of soil, use:

50 per cent rough stalked meadow grass (*Poa trivialis*)

25 per cent wood meadow grass (*Poa nemoralis*) or velvet bent (*Agrostis canina*)

25 per cent fine-leaved sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*)



**rough stalked meadow grass**



**wood meadow grass**



**velvet bent**

**fine-leaved sheep's fescue**

**Clover** (*Trifolium repens*)

In grass swards where a variety of other plants are tolerated, clover is a useful addition, locking nitrogen into the soil. The flowers feed the bees, and it keeps the lawn looking green during a drought. For best results use a dwarf variety with small leaves e.g. *Trifolium x nanum*.

