Creating a Tougher Turf

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Lower Water Use “Typical” Turf Mix

➢ Drought Tolerant Kentucky Bluegrass
  o Durable
  o Heat tolerant
  o Fine texture
  o Long lasting turf
  o Best in full sun
  o Requires water and fertilizer
  o Requires frequent mowing

➢ Perennial Ryegrass
  o Durable
  o Resistant to Necrotic Ring Spot
  o Best in full sun
  o Short lived
  o Medium drought tolerance

➢ Creeping Red Fescue
  o Rhizomatous
  o Lower growing
  o Fine Texture
  o Grows well in shade
  o Lower water use
  o Lower water and fertilizer requirements

➢ Hard Fescue, Sheep Fescue, Chewing Fescue
  o Medium drought tolerance
  o Fine texture
  o Likes sun but shade tolerant
  o Bunchgrasses (clumpy)
  o Lower fertilizer requirements

➢ Turf type tall fescue
  o Drought tolerant
  o Courser texture
  o Lower fertilizer need, but responds well to fertilization

Blends

➢ Low Grow Mix
  o 40% Perennial Ryegrass
  o 40% Creeping Red Fescue
  o 20% Turf Type Hard Fescue

➢ Low Maintenance Mix
  o 40% Turf Type Hard Fescue
  o 40% Turf Type Sheep Fescue
  o 20% Canada Bluegrass

Creating a Sustainable Turf

➢ Water only when your grass needs it
➢ Water deeply (not frequently) to encourage deep root growth
  o Kentucky Bluegrass 6-8” deep
  o Most other turf grasses 8-12” deep
  o Native grasses 12”+
    - Water for 15 minutes
    - After 18-24 hours dig a small hole or use soil probe to determine how far the water soaked in
    - Calculate amount of time needed to water to reach desired depth
➢ Set mower higher
  o Most grasses can be mown at 2.5-3” height
➢ Use mulching mower
➢ Aerate
**Drought Tolerant Turf Alternatives**

- **Streambank Wheatgrass**
  - Very drought tolerant
  - Rhizomatous
  - Course texture

- **Prairie Junegrass**
  - Very drought tolerant
  - Bunchgrass
  - Early spring green up
  - Seed is very expensive

- **Idaho Fescue**
  - Drought Tolerant
  - Low growing bunchgrass
  - Variable in color – usually bluish

**Blends**

- **Water Less Lawn**
  - 35% Streambank Wheatgrass
  - 25% Idaho Fescue
  - 20% Blue Gramma
  - 15% Canby Bluegrass
  - 5% Prairie Junegrass

**Non Grass Alternatives**

- **Yarrow**
  - Very drought tolerant
  - Mow to keep from flowering
  - Soft texture
  - Cannot use chemical broadleaf weed control

- **Clovers**
  - White Dutch Clover is best for turf type
  - Nitrogen fixing
  - Cannot use chemical broadleaf weed control
  - New variety is MicroClover
    - More drought tolerant
    - Low growing

- **Warm Season Grasses**
  - Buffalograss, Zoysia, Bermuda
  - As a rule, don’t do well in our area
    - Green only in summer
    - Very slow to establish

**Establishing Turf**

- Seed in early spring for water conservation
- Good seed to soil contact
- Mulch
- Use a starter fertilizer at the recommended rate
- Water for establishment
- Shallow frequent watering to establish root system and then slowly adapt watering habits to establish deep rooting
- Mow to fill in more quickly and reduce annual weeds