

Selecting the Right Turfgrass Species

Every year we are asked countless times, “Is there a grass that will look as good as Kentucky Bluegrass and use less water?” Every year we answer that question with this question, “How green do you want it?” Generally speaking, water requirements for traditional turf grass species are pretty comparable requiring 16 to 18 inches of water annually for plant survival. Having a dense, dark green, soft textured lawn is an entirely different water requirement and is subjective to individual preferences. Our general rule of thumb is to give it just enough water to keep it alive and add water to keep it as green as you

want it to be.

Over the course of the last decade consumers have sought a more “drought tolerant” turf grass. The industry has responded with developing varieties of the traditional species that are “more” drought tolerant. What does this mean? When compared to native grasses in Colorado requiring only 12 inches of moisture, a drought tolerant Kentucky Bluegrass variety that requires 28 inches of moisture versus a non-drought tolerant Kentucky Bluegrass requiring 34 inches drought tolerance seems irrelevant.

If your goal is to water less; the following table offers some water guidelines for traditional turf species as well as alternative species. Keep in mind, to use less water you may have to sacrifice some color and density.

Traditional Species	Water Required for Plant Survival in inches	Avg. Water Required for Turf Performance in inches
Kentucky Bluegrass	18	34
Tall Fescue	16	31
Perennial Ryegrass	16	34
Chewings Fescue	18	34
Creeping Red Fescue	18	34
Annual Ryegrass	16	34
Bentgrass	18	34

Alternative Species	Water Required for Plant Survival in inches	Avg. Water Required for Turf Performance in
Hard Fescue	14	24
Sheep Fescue	13	24
Alkaligrass	16	22
Canada Bluegrass	15	24
Canby/Sandberg/Big Bluegrass	16	24
Buffalograss	10	20
Blue Grama	7	20
Crested Wheatgrass	9	20
Streambank Wheatgrass	10	20
Western Wheatgrass	7	20
Smooth Bromegrass	14	28
Prairie Junegrass	16	24

These are a few basic guidelines we derived from experience, interpolative and comparative analysis to help in selecting turf grasses. Feel free to contact us and let one of our knowledgeable sales consultants aid you in selecting species to fit your unique circumstances.