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## Kentucky bluegrasses for Colorado lawns

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Jack Butler<sup>1/</sup>

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### Quick Facts

- Kentucky bluegrasses are the major turf-grasses of Colorado.
- Although good quality seed or sod may add to initial cost, it will save money in the long run.
- Several good performing varieties of Kentucky bluegrass are available either as seed or sod.
- Two or more varieties of bluegrass blended together may be advantageous.
- Mixtures of different kinds of grasses, such as Kentucky bluegrass, bentgrass, rough-stalk bluegrass, etc., often produce a turf that lacks uniformity.

Since a lawn area is usually a once-in-a-lifetime investment, careful attention should be given to choosing a grass or grasses that will insure a good, trouble-free lawn for years to come. Although good-quality seed or sod may add to the initial cost, it will undoubtedly save money and provide a better turf in the years to come.

### Kentucky Bluegrasses

Kentucky bluegrasses are used widely for high quality turf in Colorado. They have underground stems, or rhizomes, and form excellent sod. Their drought tolerance is fair to good, and, although they may turn brown during extended dry periods, infrequent watering will normally cause established Kentucky bluegrass to persist. "Native" Kentucky bluegrass may be found growing in Colorado where annual average precipitation is 12 to 15 inches (30 to 38 centimeters). Kentucky bluegrass is the turf in mountain towns of 10,000 feet (3,048 meters) elevation. Most varieties now available originated in cool humid regions of the world. There are more than 25 varieties available in Colorado today. They vary in their fertility needs, reaction to weather conditions, disease resistance and other characteristics.

### "Common" Kentucky

Common Kentucky is not considered a variety but a composite of many types of bluegrass. It is grown successfully throughout most of Colorado. When seeded at standard rates it produces a uniform, medium-green, medium to fine-textured turf in a relatively short time. It is fairly resistant to rust and mildew.

The greatest drawback of common Kentucky is its susceptibility to melting-out or fade-out disease. Sod webworms and other lawn insects also can be a very serious problem, both on common Kentucky and on the varieties.

Seed of common Kentucky is available.

### Park and Delta Kentucky Bluegrass

Park and Delta are vigorous growing grasses that resemble common Kentucky. Arboretum and S-21 are similar varieties. Like common Kentucky, these are quite susceptible to melting-out disease. In Colorado, these two grasses have a tendency to become chlorotic at moderate levels of available soil iron. These varieties are available as seed, but sod availability is quite limited.

### Merion Kentucky Bluegrass

Merion Kentucky bluegrass is a dark green, low-growing grass with a rather broadleaf. With proper maintenance it makes a luxuriant turf. Merion, in order to be a luxuriant turf, needs a higher fertility level than most other Kentucky bluegrasses. If a high quality turf is not mandatory and a minimum maintenance program will be followed, some other variety may be preferable to Merion.

When cared for properly, Merion will tolerate close mowing. It is resistant to melting-out disease but is susceptible to powdery mildew and rust. In Colorado, stripe smut has become a problem of Merion. Merion does not do well in the shade.

Merion is available as either seed or sod, but in much of the United States Merion has been replaced with newer varieties, thus availability is limited.

### Newport Kentucky Bluegrass

Newport Kentucky bluegrass is a vigorous growing grass with a rather wide, dark green leaf. This grass may produce a good fall turf. It has a high resistance to rust and some resistance to melting-out but is susceptible to stripe smut. Newport is a heavy seed producer and may tend to be stemmy and thin following seed head development. With the coming of many new, improved varieties, this grass—like Merion—has limited availability.

### Windsor Kentucky

Windsor Kentucky bluegrass is still used as turfgrass in Colorado. It produces a dark green, dense,

<sup>1/</sup>Jack Butler, CSU extension professor, turfgrass (revised 2/1/80)

vigorous turf of a finer texture than Baron or Merion. Windsor tends to produce less vertical growth than common, Delta or Park. It has resistance to melting-out and rust but is quite susceptible to stripe smut.

### **Fylking Kentucky**

Fylking Kentucky bluegrass is available in Colorado. This rather fine-textured, low-growing grass has shown good resistance to melting-out disease and several other common turf diseases. This grass does not perform well on soils low in available iron.

### **Baron**

This moderately dark green grass does rather well with low maintenance. It is not as drought hardy as Merion. Its density limits weed invasion. And, its low-growing habit can cause the need for less mowing than for many other varieties. Baron is widely available as seed or sod, especially in blends.

### **Adelphi**

This dark green hybrid has become widely used throughout the United States. It performs rather well on alkaline soils. It greens early in the spring. Adelphi is widely available as seed or sod, especially in blends.

### **Glade**

Glade is a low grower that establishes rather rapidly from seed. It performs well in the sun in Colorado; also, it tolerates shade rather well. Glade is available as seed or sod, especially in blends.

### **Ram I**

Ram I is a fairly coarse-textured variety that performs well on alkaline soils in Colorado. This variety develops rather rapidly from seed, and it is fairly widely available both as seed and sod, especially in blends.

### **Touchdown**

This moderately dark green grass produces a dense and aggressive turf with low mowing. Touchdown has good spring greenup, and overall good disease resistance. It does well with only moderate fertilization.

## **A-20 and Bensun (A-34) Kentucky**

A-20 and A-34 Kentucky bluegrass sod is available in Colorado. A-20, a dark green, low-growing Kentucky bluegrass, has shown good resistance to several of the more common turf diseases. However, this grass is only propagated vegetatively and no seed is available. A-34 was selected because of its high shade tolerance. A-34 has outstanding wear resistance.

### **Other Varieties**

Several "new" varieties are available in Colorado and can be considered for turf areas. It is not possible to list and discuss all varieties of Kentucky bluegrass now available or soon to come on the market. More than 60 varieties are under test at Colorado State University. Among the varieties available, but not discussed above are:

Aquila	Majestic
Birka	Parade
Bonnieblue	Plush
Bristol	Rugby
Cheri	Sydsport
Columbia	Victa
Enmundi	

When considering a new variety it is well to visit with a seedsman, sod grower or county extension agent about the strengths and weaknesses of the variety, especially as these might relate to individual situations.

### **Blends or Mixtures**

Blends of two or more varieties of Kentucky bluegrass are available both as seed and sod. The main advantage of blends is that they can combine the good features of several varieties. Depending on management practices and the environment, one of the grasses in the blend will probably become dominant. Because the general appearance between varieties of Kentucky bluegrass is slight this usually is of little concern.

Mixtures of different kinds of turfgrasses—Kentucky bluegrass, bentgrass, coarse fescue and others—can lack the uniformity of stands of only one kind of grass. Perennial grasses, such as redtop and coarse fescue, often remain in the lawn as serious and uncontrollable weeds. The choice between using a mixture or a pure stand of Kentucky bluegrass deserves careful consideration since the ultimate quality of the lawn is at stake.