

Classifying Kentucky Bluegrasses

Kentucky bluegrasses can be classified into six groups:

- *Aggressive types tolerate low mowing and will dominate in blends,*
- *Common types are deep-rooted and considered to be low maintenance grasses,*
- *Mid-Atlantic types are selected for drought and heat-tolerance,*
- *BVMG types are high seed yielders, and popular components of blends,*
- *North Latitude Compact types are dwarf types with high density and reduced vertical growth rates, and*
- *Bellevue types are moderately aggressive with good color, disease resistance and summer performance.*

Of the several turfgrass variety trials we have in place in Ithaca, nowhere do we see greater differences in varieties as we do with the Kentucky bluegrasses. As you walk across the more than 100 varieties, you see differences in color, growth habit, texture, and density. When there are disease infestations, there are usually differences among the varieties.

A few weeks ago I heard an excellent talk given at the Illinois Turf Conference by Dr. Bill Meyer, from Turf Seed. Dr. Meyer discussed a

method of classifying Kentucky bluegrasses that I was unaware of, and how he used it in developing recommendations.

He classified the bluegrasses into six groups: aggressive types, common types, Mid-Atlantic ecotypes, BVMG (Baron, Victa, Merit, Gnome) types, northern latitude compact types, Bellevue types, and other types.

Aggressive Types: The aggressive types will tolerate low mowing; as low as 3/4 inches. Therefore they are well adapted for golf course fairways and athletic fields. These grasses have

high density, and will become thatchy, especially at higher mowing heights. They will dominate in blends. Examples of aggressive types include Touchdown, Limousine, P-104 (Princeton), and A-34.

Common Types: The common bluegrass types have upright growth habits, and should therefore be mowed at least 3 inches high. They are deep rooted and are often considered to be low maintenance



Low-maintenance bluegrass trial plots at Cornell.

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Bluegrass

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grasses. They are not competitive in blends, and are susceptible to leaf spot disease. Examples of common bluegrass types include Alene, Rhonda, Voyager, Kenblue, and South Dakota common.

Mid-Atlantic Ecotypes: The mid-Atlantic ecotypes are bluegrasses that were bred or selected for drought and heat tolerance, which are characteristics very important for sod production in the mid-Atlantic area. These grasses have very deep rhizomes, and are usually the best summer performers in non-irrigated conditions. They tend to be coarse textured. Examples of mid-Atlantic ecotypes include Livingston, Wabash, SR-2000, Huntsville, and Preakness.

BVMG Types: The Baron, Victa, Merit, Gnome (BVMG) types are high seed yielders, so they are popular components of blends to bring the cost down. They may be stemmy in the spring. They are less disease resistant than other improved varieties, and they have later spring green-up. Besides the four varieties listed above, other bluegrasses in this category include Fortuna, Marque and Kelly.

North Latitude Compact Types: The north latitude compact types are dwarf types with high density and reduced vertical growth rates. These varieties have shown better disease resistance, have slower green up in the spring, and are competitive in blends. Examples of this class of varieties include Blacksburg, Midnight, Able I, Indigo, Unique, Glade, America, and Barsweet.

Bellevue Types: The Bellevue type bluegrasses are moderately aggressive. They have the best winter and spring color, but can be stemmy in the spring. They have good disease resistance and good summer performance. These varieties are compatible in blends, but are not very competitive. Examples of Bellevue types include Columbia, Dawn, Classic, Banff, Trenton, Suffolk, Freedom, and Haga.

Other Types: This class of bluegrasses catches those that don't clearly fit in one of the other classes. Many of these varieties are actually hybrids of Bellevue types and Baron. These varieties are moderately competitive and have good disease resistance. Therefore, they are useful in blends. Examples include Aspen, Adelphi, Challenger, Cobalt, Eclipse, Liberty, NuBlue, Nustar, Shamrock, and Washington.

Based on the characteristics of these bluegrasses, Dr. Meyer went on with the following recommendations (see also Table 1):

Fairways: 50-100% aggressive types with some north latitude compact types.

Medium traffic areas: 10-30% aggressive types, 10-30% north latitude compact types, 10% Bellevue types, and 20-30% others.

General purpose lawn areas: 0-5% aggressive, 10-20% BVMG types, 10-20% mid-Atlantic ecotypes, 10-20% north latitude compact types, 10-20% Bellevue types, and 10-20% other types.

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Of the several turfgrass variety trials we have in place in Ithaca, nowhere do we see greater varietal differences than with Kentucky bluegrasses. Among more than 100 varieties, you see differences in color, growth habit, texture, density, and disease resistance.

Table 1. Recommended uses for Kentucky bluegrasses.

Turf Use	Aggressive Types	Mid-Atlantic Types	BVMG Types	North Latitude Compact Types	Bellevue Types	Other Types
Fairways	50-100%			Some		
Medium Traffic Area	10-30%			10-30%	10%	20-30%
General Purpose Lawn	0-5%	10-20%	10-20%	10-20%	10-20%	10-20%

