

2014 Recommended Tall Fescue Cultivars for North Carolina

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A great number of tall fescue cultivars have been tested in North Carolina which provide excellent performance (p. 9, Carolina Lawns, 2008) based on cultivar trials. Many of these cultivars are still being sold in grass seed products and would be expected to perform very well in NC assuming they are properly established and maintained.

Recommended lists before 2012, only included cultivars that performed among the top performing cultivars in the last trial. Beginning in 2013 recommended cultivar lists changed to include not only the most recent trial but also trial data going back to 2002---since many of the older cultivars are still available and would still be good performers in NC. They also included some data from eight other transition zone states to give a better representation of performance across the transition zone. So, a much larger dataset was used and then the two lists were combined to form one grand list (Table 1). While this makes for a long list, hopefully it will make it easier for users to find good-performing tall fescue cultivar across the state.

As previously stated, none of the cultivars in our tests have been completely resistant to brown patch (*Rhizoctonia spp.*). Using appropriate management practices remains the primary means of reducing injury from this disease. Kentucky 31 (K-31), is a coarse bladed, upright tall fescue that usually produces lower density and the lowest quality ratings in the NC field trials.

Companies often blend multiple cultivars together for sale in the retail market but use a simple Name Brand to enhance brand recognition. The combination of grasses is often recommended since there is no one grass that will perform well under all conditions. So when shopping for tall fescue seed, the name on the front of the bag may not represent or identify the cultivars that make up the product. To add to the confusion, the cultivars and/or the percentage of each cultivar within the bag of a Name Brand may change from year to year but the Name Brand often remains unchanged. Again, this is done for brand recognition. Under close inspection, however, the bags are required to list the cultivar(s) and the percentage of each cultivar by weight within the bag. Customers often ask about matching our recommended cultivars to those listed on the bag seed label. Unfortunately, it may not be easy to find a bag that contains only cultivars from our recommended lists. It is suggested, however, that at least 50% of the contents consist of NCSU's recommended cultivars. The higher the percentage, the greater the chances of obtaining a successful turf.

Table 1: The following cultivars performed well in long-term tests conducted between 2002 and 2011, plus some shorter-term testing through 2013. Not all of these cultivars will be available in 2014.

06 Dust	Avenger	Biltmore	Bullseye *
2 nd Millennium	Barlexas	Bingo	Cannavaro
3 rd Millennium SRP *†	Barlexas II	Bizem**	Catalyst *
Apache III	Bar Fa	Blackwatch	Cayenne
AST 7001	Barrera	Blade Runner II	Cessane Rz
AST 7002	Barrington	Bonsai	Chipper
AST 9001	Barrobusto	Braveheart *†	Cochise IV *†
AST 9002	Barvado	Bravo	Col-1

Constitution	Greenbrooks	Padre	Shenandoah Elite *
Corgi	Greenkeeper	Patagonia	Sidewinder *
Corona	Gremlin	Padre	Skyline
Coyote	Greystone	Pedigree	Solara
Darlington	Guardian 21	Picasso	Southern Choice II
Davinci	Guardian 41 *	Piedmont	Speedway *†
Desire	Hemi	Plantation	Spyder LS *
Dominion	Honky Tonk	Proseeds 5301	SR 8550
Dynamic	Hot Rod **	Prospect	SR 8650
Dynasty	Hunter	Pure Gold	STR-8BB5
Endeavor	Inferno	Quest	Sunset Gold
Escalade	Innovator	Raptor II *	T31**
Essential	Integrity	Rebel Exeda	Taccoa
Evergreen 2	J-130	Rebel Sentry	Tanzania *
Falcon IV	J-140	Regiment II	Trio *
Falcon NG	Jaguar 3	Regenerate**	Tahoe II
Falcon V *†	Jamboree *	Rendition	Talladega *
Faith *†	JT-42	Rhambler 2 SRP *†	Tarheel
Fat Cat *	Justice †	RK 4	Terrano**
Festnova**	Kalahari	RK 5 *†	Titan ltd
Fidelity	Kitty Hawk 2000	Raptor II	Titanium LS
Finelawn Elite	Legitimate	Rebel IV	Tracer
Finelawn Xpress *	Lexington	Rembrandt	Traverse SRP *
Finesse II	LS 1200 *†	Reunion	Tulsa Time
Firebird	LSD**	Riverside	Turbo *
Firecracker LS *†	Magellan	RNP	Turbo RZ
Firenza *	Masterpiece	Rocket	Tuxedo
Five Point	Matador	Scorpion	Ultimate
Focus	Millennium SRP	Serengeti	Venture
Forte	Monet *†	Shelby	Umbrella
Garrison *	Mustang 4 *	Sheridan	Van Gogh *
Gazelle II *	Ninja 2	Signia	Watchdog
GE-1	Ol' Glory	Silver Hawk	Wolfpack II *
Gold Medallion	Olympic Gold	Silverstar	Xtremegreen
Grande 3	P5G-82BR	Shenandoah III *†	

*top performing cultivar in region from last 5-year study.

†best of the best in Raleigh location from last 5-year study.

**Based on current NTEP trial, 2013 performance.