

2016 Top Performing Tall Fescue and Kentucky Bluegrass Cultivars for North Carolina

Grady Miller, Extension Turfgrass Specialist

A great number of tall fescue cultivars have been tested in North Carolina which provide excellent performance based on cultivar trials. *The 2014 Recommended Tall Fescue Cultivars lists many great cultivars that still should perform well in NC.* 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. The list is long, but that makes it easier for users to find good-performing tall fescue cultivar across the state.

While Kentucky bluegrass cultivars do not enjoy the same level of success in North Carolina as they do further north, there are still some great cultivars that can be managed as a nice turf either as a monostand or planted as a mixture with tall fescue cultivars. Also, the Kentucky bluegrasses generally perform better in western NC than they do on the piedmont. The recommended Kentucky bluegrass list published on turf files in 2014 provides a great list of cultivars that still should perform well in NC.

The approach for this year's list was to highlight the great cultivars we are currently testing. In addition, the lists will reference NTEP data from six other transition zone states to give a better representation of performance across the transition zone.

None of the tall fescue 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. Generally Kentucky bluegrass cultivars are susceptible to summer patch when grown in Raleigh. Using appropriate management practices remains the primary means of reducing injury from this disease.

Keep in mind that 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 tall fescue cultivars performed well in tests conducted between 2013 and 2015. Not all of these cultivars will be available in 2016.

07 Dust **	Firecracker SLS **	Reflection †
07Walk **	Firewall * †	Raptor III * †**
4 th Millennium SRP * † **	Foxhound	Regenerate * †
Ares	Frontline	Rhambler 2 SRP * †
Aquaduct	GO-DFR	Rowdy * †
Avenger II * † **	Grande 3 * † **	Rockwell * † **
Bizem †**	GTO * † **	Saltillo
Black Tail †**	Hemi †	Screamer LS †
Bullseye	Hot Rod † **	Swagger
Caesar †	Hover	Technique * † **
Catalyst † **	Inspiration	Temptation
Diablo †	Kingdom †	Terrano †
Dynamite LS	Leonardo † **	Temple †
Escalade	Maestro † **	Temptation
Falcon IV	Meridian †	Thor * †
Falcon V †	MET 1 * † **	Thunderstruck
Faith †	MET 3 * † **	Titanium 2LS * † **
Fayette	MET 6 SEL * † **	Traverse 2 SRP * † **
Fesnova	Michelangelo † **	Turfway
Firebird 2	Rain Dance †	Xtender

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

†best of the best in Raleigh location.

**Based on current NTEP trial, 2015 performance.

Table 2: The following Kentucky bluegrass cultivars performed well in tests conducted between 2012 and 2015. Not all of these cultivars will be available in 2016.

America *	Cabernet * † **	Mazama * † ** §
Arrowhead *	Dauntless *	Midnight * † ** §
Avid *	Endurance *	NuChicago * † **
Award * † **	Empire † ** §	Oasis *
Barvette HGT * † ** §	Jackrabbit *	Rush *
Bluebank * §	Keeneland * †	Skye * † **
Blue Coat *	Legend *	Sudden Impact *
Blue Note * † ** §	Lunar *	

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

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

** Based on current NTEP trial, 2015 performance.

§excellent summer patch tolerance