

Turfgrasses

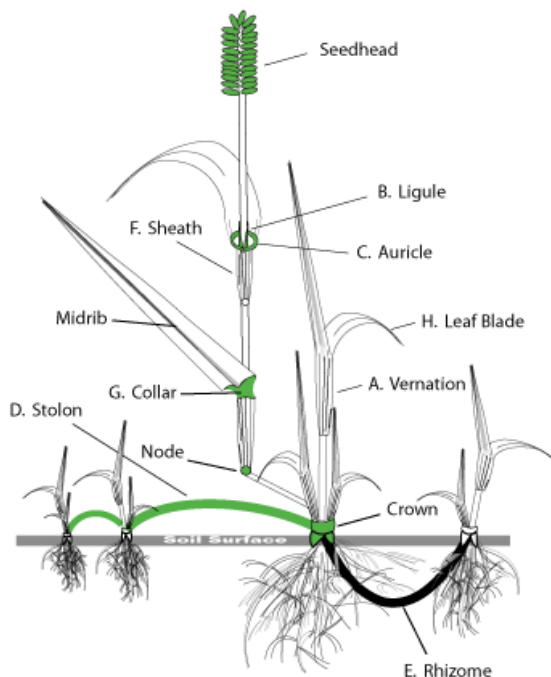
Turfgrass is the most widely-grown ornamental crop in the southern United States. Of the two million acres of turfgrass grown in North Carolina, single family homes account for about 60%, with acreage concentrated in the population centers of the state. Turfgrass is also used on sod farms, athletic fields, roadsides, golf courses, and parkland, and around schools, churches, and commercial buildings.

North Carolina sits in the transition zone for cool- and warm-season turfgrasses. Cool-season turf species are those that have optimum growth at temperatures between 60 and 75°F, whereas warm-season turfgrasses have optimum growth between 80 and 95°F. By far the most commonly-grown species in North Carolina is the cool-season grass tall fescue, followed by warm-season bermudagrass. In addition to tall fescue, the cool-season grasses include creeping bentgrass, fine fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, annual ryegrass, and perennial ryegrass. Warm-season grasses include bahiagrass, carpetgrass, centipedegrass, St. Augustinegrass, and zoysiagrass, in addition to bermudagrass.

For help in selecting an appropriate turfgrass species for your location and intended use, visit the [Turfgrass Selection Decision Aid](#) on the TurfFiles Web site.



TURFGRASS IDENTIFICATION



Identification of turfgrasses is a skill that is critical to effective turfgrass management. Proper management of turf depends on knowledge of the species growth habits, tolerances of cultural methods, and susceptibilities to damage from environmental stresses, including pests.

This diagram of a grass plant shows the major plant structures which are important in identification: vernation, ligule, auricles, stolons, rhizomes, sheath, collar, leaf blade, and seedhead. Most botanical identification keys are based on floral and reproductive structures of plants. While this approach is dependable, it is usually of little practical use for turf managers because most grass seedheads are constantly being removed by mowing. Turfgrass identification depends heavily on the vegetative characteristics of the grass plant.

Additional clues are often obvious factors like the time of year, cutting height, predominant soil moisture conditions, and degree of shade present. For example, an actively growing turf during the summer is apt to be a warm-season turf, whereas turf actively growing during the cool portion of the year is most likely a cool-season species.

For help in identifying your turfgrass, visit the [Turf & Weed Identification Decision Aid](#) on the TurfFiles web site.

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Selection of adapted turfgrass species and cultivars and the use of cultural practices are important in minimizing problems. Good management practices include:

- (1) Mowing at the recommended height for the selected turfgrass species and removing clippings when seedheads of grassy weeds are present;
- (2) Applying the proper amount of nitrogen at the correct time according to the turfgrass present;
- (3) Using soil tests to determine needed nutrients and lime; and
- (4) Irrigating to a depth of 6 – 8 inches to encourage deep rooting when the grass shows signs of moisture stress. [TIMS](#), Turf Irrigation Water Management Model, is a new decision aid on the TurfFiles web site which can help you determine when and how much to irrigate.

Links Included in the publication:

TIMS: <http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/tims/>

Turf & Weed Identification Decision Aid: <http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/turfid/>

Turfgrass Selection Decision Aid: <http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/turfselect/>

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