



FINE FESCUES

Recommended Fine Fescue Cultivars for Indiana Turf

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Five fine fescue taxa (strong creeping red fescue, slender creeping red fescue, Chewings fescue, hard fescue, and sheep fescue) are often grouped together and called “fine fescues.”

This publication provides information to select recommended fine fescue cultivars that have performed well in recent experiments.

Take-Home Points

- Recommended cultivars in this publication have been evaluated for at least four or more years in Indiana or neighboring states.
- Recommended cultivars are new and improved cultivars that will improve a turfgrass sward with higher turf quality

and density, greater stress tolerance, lower nutrient and water requirements, and fewer pest problems than older cultivars.

The term *cultivar* is short for “cultivated variety.” The term *cultivar*, which is commonly used in the turf industry, is equivalent to the term *variety*, which is more commonly used in other horticultural and agronomic industries. Ongoing breeding efforts in both North America and Europe continue to produce new and improved fine fescue cultivars. These cultivars are regularly evaluated under various management regimes across the United States (Braun et al., 2020). While many fine fescue cultivars have adapted

to the North Central region of the United States, it is important to identify and select top-performing cultivars to increase the likelihood of long-term success (Fig. 1).

To identify cultivars that will perform well for specific geographic regions and different management regimes, cultivar trials at universities (including Purdue University) and breeding institutes are conducted at numerous testing sites over multiple years across North America. These cultivar research trials are conducted in collaboration with the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) (www.ntep.org), which is a program that coordinates uniform evaluation research trials led by turfgrass scientists for multiple turfgrass species across the United States and Canada. These trials are typically conducted for five or more years. Data recorded throughout the duration of these trials include turfgrass quality, color, texture, density, spring green-up, establishment, drought tolerance, winter injury, pest tolerance (disease, insect, and weed), traffic damage, recovery, and more.

To determine which fine fescue cultivars are best adapted for Indiana, researchers at Purdue University carefully reviewed the last 20 years of NTEP data for Indiana and neighboring states and identified the top statistical performers. These best performing cultivars for use in Indiana must have been evaluated

for at least four or more years (i.e., growing seasons). In addition, these top performing cultivars were then checked to find out which have been commercially available in the last three years. Within each fine fescue taxon list, recommended cultivars that are listed in black are known to be commercially available; recommended cultivars listed in *italics* may not yet be commercially available.

The goal of this publication is to provide current fine fescue cultivar recommendations for Indiana turf sites. Selecting from these recommended cultivars will likely result in a turfgrass sward with higher turfgrass quality and density, greater stress tolerance, lower nutrient and water requirements, and fewer pest problems than stands of older, less-improved cultivars. In the following sections, cultivar recommendations are listed for each fine fescue taxon:

- Strong creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *rubra*)
- Slender creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *littoralis*)
- Chewings fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *commutata*, synonym *Festuca rubra* ssp. *fallax*)
- Hard fescue (*Festuca brevipila*) and sheep fescue (*Festuca ovina*, synonym *Festuca ovina* ssp. *hirtula*)



Figure 1. Comparison of new vs. old fine fescue cultivars on July 16, 2019, managed under minimal N fertilization, pest control, and no supplemental irrigation in West Lafayette, Indiana: (A) improved Chewings fescue cultivar released within the last 10 years vs. (B) old Chewings fescue cultivar released in early 1990s; and (C) improved strong creeping red fescue cultivar released within the last 10 years vs. (D) old strong creeping red fescue cultivar release in the 1960s. Photos by Ross Braun

Cultivar Recommendations

For each fine fescue taxon, recommended cultivars known to be commercially available are listed in alphabetical order. Other recommended cultivars listed in *italics* may not yet be commercially available. In addition, we have also listed in a footnote some "cultivars to avoid," which are older cultivars but still commonly sold.

Strong creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *rubra*)

Cardinal II	Cindy Lou	Garnet	Navigator II	Rosecity
Celestial	Class One	Jasper II	Pathfinder	Shademaster III
Chantilly	Epic	Kent	<i>Rev</i>	SR 5250

Cultivars to avoid: Boreal, common creeping red, common spreading red, VNS ("variety not stated")

Slender creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *littoralis*)

Beudin	Seabreeze GT	SeaLink	SeaMist	Shoreline
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Cultivars to avoid: Pennlawn, Dawson, common creeping red, VNS ("variety not stated")

Chewings fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *commutata*, synonym *Festuca rubra* ssp. *fallax*)

7 Seas	Compass II	Lacrosse	Seducer	Wrigley 2
Ambassador	Culumbra II	Longfellow 3	Shadow III	Zodiac
<i>Bolster</i>	Fairmont	<i>Momentum</i>	Silhouette	
Cascade	Intrigue 2	Radar	SR 5130	
Castle	J-5	Sandrine	Treasure II	

Cultivars to avoid: common Chewings, VNS ("variety not stated")

Hard fescue (*Festuca brevipila*) and [sheep fescue (*Festuca ovina*, synonym *Festuca ovina* ssp. *hirtula*)]

Beacon	Gladiator	Minimus	Quatro (sheep)	Spartan II
Bighorn GT	Gotham	<i>MNHD-14</i>	Reliant IV	Sword
Chariot	Hardtop	Nordic	Rescue 911	
Eureka II	Jetty	Oxford	Resolute	

Cultivars to avoid: Durar, common hard, common sheep, VNS ("variety not stated")

More Information

For more information, contact your local Extension office or see *Fine Fescues: Understanding the Differences, Establishment of Fine Fescues, Maintenance Calendar for Fine Fescue Lawns, Management of Fine Fescues, Fine Fescues in Minimal-to-no Mow Areas, Purchasing Quality Seed*, and *Establishing a Lawn from Seed* Extension publications available at www.turf.purdue.edu.

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References

Braun, R.C., Patton, A.J., Watkins, E., Koch, P., Anderson, N.P., Bonos, S.A., & Brilman, L.A. (2020). Fine fescues: A review of the species, their improvement, production, establishment, and management. *Crop Science*, 60, 1142–1187. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csc2.20122>