

Tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*)



Image from University of California - Davis

Tall fescue is a cool-season bunch-type grass. There are many varieties of tall fescue, but turf type tall fescues are best suited for athletic surfaces. Tall fescue is tolerant to heat, drought, cooler temperatures, and disease. It also grows successfully with minimal care making it a popular species for low budget athletic surfaces. Tall fescue has bunch-type growth and has a tendency to clump if the stand is not maintained with proper cultural practices. Turf type tall fescues can be mixed with perennial ryegrass to increase density and recovery from environmental stresses and wear. Tall fescue is well adapted to athletic surfaces where wear resistance and recuperative capacity are important.

Identifying Characteristics:

Growth Habit: bunch-type, occasional and short rhizomes

Vernation: rolled

Ligule: short, truncate, membranous (0.5 mm) very jagged

Auricles: non-clasping, small, short, hairs on edges

Sheath: open, round, and smooth

Collar: broad, divided, hairy on edges

Leaf tip: pointed

Leaf Blades: adaxial: deeply ridged; abaxial: glossy, prominent midrib; edges of leaf blade are rough

Seedhead: panicle



Image from A.J. Turgeon

Additional Resources:

[Tall Fescue](#) – North Carolina State University

[Tall Fescue](#) – Penn State University

[Fescues](#) – University of Tennessee

[Tall Fescue](#) – University of California - Davis

[Tall Fescue](#) – Texas A&M University

[Tall fescue varieties for New Jersey sports fields](#) – Rutgers University

[Tall Fescues on Athletic Fields](#) - Ohio State University

Tall Fescue Maintenance for Athletic Fields

[Cool Season Grass Athletic Field Maintenance Program](#) - University of Kentucky

[Fall Turf Maintenance](#) - University of Massachusetts

[General Guidelines for Athletic Field Maintenance of Cool Season Grasses](#) - University of Missouri

[Tall Fescue and Kentucky Bluegrass Athletic Field Maintenance Calendar](#) - North Carolina State University

[Standard Guide for Maintaining Sports Fields and Recreational Turf in Ohio](#) - Ohio State University

[Building and Maintaining Soccer Fields in Indiana](#) - Purdue University

[Maintaining Athletic Fields](#) - Rutgers University

[Maintenance Calendar for Cool Season Turfgrasses in Virginia](#) - Virginia Tech