

## FEATURES

- Drought resistant
- Low growing
- Shade tolerant
- Blue-green color
- Little or no fertilizer required once established
- Endophyte-enhanced
- Uses: Home lawns, golf course roughs, parks, unmown sites, green roofs, ornamental areas

## BENEFITS

- Very low maintenance turf
- Use mown or unmown
- Tolerates neglect
- Reduced diseases
- Little or no pesticides required
- Ornamental seedheads

## SEEDING RATES

Seeds/lb: 500,000  
Seeds/kg: 1,100,000

- New Turf
  - 4–6 lbs/1,000 sq ft
  - 200–250 lbs/acre
  - 20–29 gr/m<sup>2</sup>
  - 225–285 kg/ha
- Ornamental Roughs
  - 2 lbs/1,000 sq ft
  - 90 lbs/acre
  - 10 gr/m<sup>2</sup>
  - 100 kg/ha

## ESTABLISHMENT

- 7–14 days
- First mowing (if mowing) 2–4 weeks after emergence

**SR 3210**

**BLUE FESCUE**

**SR 3210 blue fescue** is a very low maintenance fine fescue that can be used in many turf settings – either mown or unmown. Blue fescues are considered a separate species, a subspecies of hard fescue or a sheeps fescue by various taxonomists. Whatever the species, SR 3210 blue fescue is low growing, very stress and drought tolerant as well as shade tolerant and has a glaucous blue color. It is a fine-textured, bunch type grass that will not invade other areas. It's perfect for environmentally sensitive sites since it requires little or no fertility and has low water requirements after establishment.

### Multiple Uses

Blue fescues have traditionally been sold as ornamental grasses, with a few spaced plants in a landscape bed.

These single plants with lovely seedheads blend well with wildflowers or other ornamental grasses. The seed availability of blue fescue, with consistent blue shade, makes it a favorite for areas where

low maintenance turf is desired. SR 3210 is well adapted to a mown turf situation with the blue color showing more expression under stress. It can be used for home lawns, golf course roughs, roadsides, cemeteries, commercial sites and green roofs. The distinctive color can be used to add landscaping detail and interest to mown turf areas. It blends well with other fine fescue species.



### Very Low Maintenance

The plants used to develop SR 3210 came from the lowest input turf sites. Blue fescues are found in cemeteries, parks and roadsides that are unirrigated, with no fertilizer and mown infrequently. The waxy leaf covering, that contributes to the blue color of these plants, reduces water loss so the plants can survive extended droughts. The foliage is not taller than 12 inches so mowing only needs to be done to remove seedheads. It has good winter color and may look greener during this period. SR 3210 is very shade tolerant and thrives under the dry shade of trees while persisting in full sun. It needs little or no fertilizer, which makes it ideal for low maintenance sites.

# Fine Fescue Management – Reduced Input Grasses

Dr. Leah A. Brilman

Turfgrasses provide many environmental benefits including reducing carbon dioxide, cooling the environment, preventing wind and water erosion, controlling dust and cleaning water. The fine fescues are excellent choice for turf that provide environmental benefits with reduced inputs. From golf course fairways to unmown areas, the fine fescues require less water, lower nitrogen and reduced mowing compared to many other turf species. The fine fescues persist in soils that are droughty, acid and infertile. Although they perform well in the shade and with tree root competition, they can also be used in sites where other turfgrasses will not persist, they can also be used in the full sun. The hard and sheep fescues prefer well drained soils but the red fescues can tolerate a wider range of soil types.

The general term fine fescue refers to a group of species and subspecies that are all leafy, low-growing grasses with fine bristle-like leaves. The five primary types used for turf are in two general subtypes, the red fescue complex and the hard fescue complex. The red fescues include Chewings (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *commutata*), strong creeping red (*F. rubra* ssp. *rubra*) and slender creeping red (*F. rubra* ssp. *litoralis*) fescue. The hard fescues include hard (*F. brevipila*), sheep (*F. ovina*) and blue (*F. glauca*) fescue. Each of these subtypes has different strength and weaknesses. Seed Research of Oregon has been actively working on improvements to these species for many years and has developed cultivars with superior performance compared to what was available even a few years ago. These superior cultivars include SR 5130 and Silhouette Chewings Fescue, Shoreline slender creeping red fescue, SR 5250 strong creeping red fescue, SR 3150 and Scaldis II hard fescue and SR 3210 blue fescue.

## USES AND ADAPTATION

Fine fescues can be used for many sites from very low maintenance sites that are unmown, such as roadsides, reclamation areas and even home lawns, to golf course fairways and greens. Traditionally they were used in areas with cooler summers or in the shade but recent breeding has emphasized heat tolerance as well as disease and insect resistance. Seed Research of Oregon has emphasized developing fine fescue cultivars with high endophyte levels for insect resistance, stress tolerance and improved dollar spot resistance. They can all be blended with Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), colonial bentgrass (browntop) (*Agrostis capillaris*) and other fine fescues.

The hard, blue and sheep fescues have superior drought tolerance and good wear tolerance but slow recovery if damaged. They do excellent in the dry shade under trees and perform better under very low maintenance with few inputs. Typically these species have better resistance to red thread and net blotch but only the newest cultivars such as SR 3150 hard fescue have the improved summer patch resistance necessary for heavy wear sites. Once established the improved hard fescues have a high water use efficiency rating due to their leaf structure, deep rooting and high root to shoot ratio. These are all bunch type grasses that spread by tillering. High nitrogen can lead to excessive thatch development in these species.

The red fescues establish quicker than the hard fescues and have better growth during cool times of the year. They are well adapted to golf course fairways usage and the improved Chewings and slender creeping red fescues can be used for golf greens. The strong creeping red fescue have spreading rhizomes and are well adapted to blend with Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass, as well as other fine fescues. These species tend to recover better from wear. The red fescues also have a natural herbicide they release from their roots. They tend to be more salt tolerant, with the slender creeping red fescues among the most salt tolerant cool season turfgrasses. They can also be used as part of overseeding blends for dormant bermudagrass.

## ESTABLISHMENT

The seeding rate for fine fescue should be 4 to 6 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft (20 to 29 grams per sq. m) for permanent turf. For golf roughs and reclamation sites the seeding rates can be reduced to allow individual plant development. Establishment is rapid and seedling vigor is high for the creeping red and Chewings fescues but slower for the hard, sheep and blue fescues. The creeping red fescues can repair damage with their rhizomes but the other species are all bunch-types and may require overseeding to repair injury.

## MAINTENANCE

The fine fescues are low in cultural intensity. The low growth rate and dwarf growth habit can significantly reduce the amount of mowing required during the growing season. The new hard fescue can be mown down to 1/2 inch (12 mm) or mown only to remove seedheads once a year. The strong creeping red fescues can be mown down to 1/2 inch (12 mm) but also perform well at 2.5 inch (60 mm) height or as an unmown meadow. Chewings and slender creeping red fescues can be mown at greens height, fairways height, lawn height or unmown. The red fescues may require slightly more mowing than the hard fescues but still less than many other species,

Fertility should be kept low. The sheep and blue fescues can take no or minimal fertility. Nitrogen levels for the hard fescues should be 1 to 1.5 lbs. 1000 sq. feet per year (5 to 7.5 grams/sq. m), although they can persist with none. The red and Chewings fescues perform best with 1.5 to 2 lbs. of nitrogen per 1000 sq. feet per year. This is best split between fall and spring. In areas with longer growing season or more wear higher fertility will be required.

## WATERING

Fine fescue can survive in more northern areas with limited or no water, although they may go dormant. Their water use rate is low and they can maintain acceptable turf quality at lower soil water potentials. Depending on the location some watering may be required to maintain growth. Overwatering can make them more disease susceptible and less drought tolerant.