

Versatile Red Fescues: Improvements in Chewings and Creeping Red Fescues

Fine Fescue Improvements

The fine fescues are traditionally known as fine textured, low maintenance, shade tolerant turfgrasses. However, recent breeding advances have expanded the range of use, improving the heat and drought tolerance of all species. These species can now be used in sun and shade over a much broader climatic range than traditionally thought.

Fine Fescue Characteristics

The fine fescue can be divided into two subtypes based on genetic relationships, red and hard fescues. The hard fescues, including hard, sheep and blue fescue, have traditionally been known as the species that are more drought tolerant and require lower nitrogen. The red fescues, including Chewings, strong creeping red and slender creeping red fescues, germinate more rapidly and have better winter and spring growth.

Superior Red Fescues

Recent trials have shown that improved Chewings and red fescues can be used for many of the turf sites traditionally reserved for hard and blue, while capturing the advantages of the red fescues. The newest red fescues are much more drought tolerant, have excellent heat tolerance and can be used for low maintenance sites, while retaining the rapid germination, excellent spring and winter growth and low mowing tolerance of the red fescues. They can be used from high maintenance golf greens, tees and fairways to low maintenance golf roughs, parks and home lawns. The hard fescues continue to be the grass of choice in areas of dense, dry shade. It is also important to remember that the Chewings and hard fescues are both bunch grasses so for some uses Chewings fescues may be the better substitute for the hard fescues.



Drought Tolerance (Dormancy) Ratings of Fine Fescue: 1999 Fine Fescue NTEP 1999-2002 Data

Drought Tolerance Ratings: 1-9, 9=No Dormancy

Variety *Quality*

Ambrose Chewings 9.0

SR 5100 Chewings **8.3**

Silhouette Chewings **8.3**

Scaldis II Hard **7.7**

Quatro Sheeps 7.7

Bighorn Sheeps 7.3

SR 3200 Blue **7.3**

SR 5250 Strong Creeping **4.0**

Boreal Strong Creeping 2.0

Common Strong Creeping 2.0

LSD @ 5% 2.3

**Quality Ratings of Fine Fescue Cultivars
Under Low Input in 10 Locations
1999-2002 Data**

Turfgrass Quality Ratings 1-9, 9=Ideal Turf

Variety	Quality
Longfellow II Chewings	5.8
Jasper II Strong creeping	5.7
Oxford Hard	5.7
SR 5250 Strong creeping	5.6
SR 5100 Chewings	5.5
SR 3150 Hard	5.5
Scaldis II Hard	5.2
Scaldis Hard	5.2
Quatro Sheep	5.2
Bighorn Sheep	5.2
Jamestown II Chewings	5.1
Boreal Strong Creeping	4.5
Common Strong Creeping	4.5
LSD @ 5%	0.3

**Quality Ratings of Fine Fescue Cultivars
under Fairway Traffic at WI
1999 Fine Fescue NTEP
1999-2002 Data**

Turfgrass Ratings: 1-9, 9=Ideal Turf

Variety	Quality
Longfellow II Chewings	6.0
Jasper II Strong Creeping	5.8
SR 5100 Chewings	5.7
SR 5250 Strong Creeping	5.7
Silhouette Chewings	5.5
SR 3150 Hard	5.4
Jamestown II Chewings	5.3
Reliant II Hard	4.9
Boreal Strong Creeping	4.9
Common Strong Creeping	4.8
Quatro Sheeps	4.6
Bighorn Sheeps	4.5
Defiant Hard	4.5
LSD @ 5%	0.8

**Quality Ratings of Fine Fescue Cultivars
in the Transition Region (VA)
2003 Fine Fescue NTEP
2006 Data**

Turfgrass Ratings: 1-9, 9=Ideal Turf

Variety	Quality
Reliant II Hard	7.6
SR 5130 Chewings	7.2
Cardinal Strong Creeping	7.2
Spartan II Hard	7.0
Scaldis Hard	6.6
Quatro Sheeps	6.5
Garnet Strong Creeping	6.3
Longfellow II Chewings	6.1
Boreal Strong Creeping	4.3
LSD @ 5%	1.3

**Quality Ratings of Fine Fescue Cultivars
under Low Maintenance in RI
No Irrigation and Low Nitrogen
2003 Fine Fescue NTEP
2006 Data**

Turfgrass Ratings: 1-9, 9=Ideal Turf

Variety	Quality
Spartan II Hard	7.4
SR 5130 Chewings	6.8
Compass Chewings	6.6
Garnet Strong Creeping	6.3
Longfellow II Chewings	6.0
Quatro Sheeps	5.6
SR 3000 Hard	5.5
Boreal Strong Creeping	2.4
LSD @ 5%	0.9