

Fine Fescue Turfgrass Sod

A popular trend in golf course renovation and new design is the inclusion of Fine Fescue turfgrass in hazard areas such as roughs and bunker surrounds. Fine Fescue turfgrass has several advantages, the key ones being its ability to thrive under very low maintenance regimes and the option of leaving it uncut if desired.

Although there are various suppliers of Fine Fescue turfgrass sod, keep in mind that not all turfgrass is created equally. Fine Fescue turfgrass sod is a recently evolving product and you will want to choose the right one to best suit your use.

First generation Fine Fescue-Kentucky Bluegrass blends

Traditionally, Fine Fescue in turfgrass sod form was produced in a blend with Bluegrass. The lack of rhizome production in the Fescues meant that it had to be carried by a rhizome-producing Bluegrass so that it could be harvested more easily. The typical combination includes 20% by weight of Kentucky Bluegrass, but because Bluegrass contains a much higher number of seeds per pound, the end product often resembles a blend that included 50 % Bluegrass. (400 seeds per pound for Fine Fescues vs. 1350 seeds per pound for Kentucky Bluegrass.)

Although this blend allows turfgrass sod to be moved onto the site, the inclusion of Bluegrass had critical drawbacks. In conditions that favor Bluegrass, over time the rhizome-spreading grass would dominate the stand. If left in an un-mown state the vigorous growth of the Bluegrass would result in the stand becoming tangled and matted — resembling a grass version of a bad hair day. When an area is matted, it becomes difficult to walk through and the grass becomes almost impossible to play because the thick Bluegrass literally grabs the golfer's club.

New turfgrass sod product – a pure blend of Fine Fescues

Today with the use of advanced techniques and materials, Fine Fescues, which on their own do not produce a sod mat, can be produced in a 100% pure Fine Fescue sod form without Kentucky Bluegrass. This eliminates the problems that are associated with Kentucky Bluegrass as described above. With this purer blend, playability is enhanced and the turfgrass stand will not be overcome by the rhizome-spreading Bluegrass.

[Incidentally, Manderley produces a blend combining Chewing's Fescue, Hard Fescue, Blue Fescue and Slender Creeping Red Fescue. This blend is well suited to both well maintained and ultra low maintenance sites. The turfgrass is very shade tolerant, has good drought resistance and suited to well drained areas.]

Applications

In applying turfgrass artistry to a course, Fine Fescue defines roughs and hazard areas when left to grow long. With mid summer's high temperatures Fine Fescue will go into a summer dormancy, turning a golden brown colour. This added visual effect is complemented by the fact that the golf ball remains playable when in the hazard area. When used on a large scale, the effect of Fine Fescue is to enhance the "links style" design.

The environmental benefits of the turfgrass are many. Fine Fescue turf is a very low maintenance grass that is adaptable to well-drained, infertile soils and requires very little fertilization. The grasses are also endophyte-enhanced to give them insect resistance. These attributes contribute to its growing popularity as golf courses continue to adopt more environmentally-friendly maintenance practices.

Fine Fescue turfgrass sod is a valuable tool to both enhance the environment and at the same time get back to the historic roots of golf.



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