

# The Georgia Gardener™

[www.walterreeves.com](http://www.walterreeves.com)

## TALL FESCUE CULTIVATION

Tall fescue is a common lawn grass in the northern part of the Southeast. It is green year-round and is easy to re-seed if damaged. Older varieties, like 'Kentucky 31', have been supplanted by superior turf-type tall fescue selections like 'Rebels Supreme', 'Smart Seed', 'Atlanta Blend' and 'Adobe'. Because it is a cool season grass, tall fescue suffers during extreme summer temperatures (above 90°F) and drought. It can be re-seeded yearly in the fall (best) or spring (marginal) to repair damage. Summer irrigation is a necessity for best appearance unless the fescue is growing on deeply cultivated, loamy soil.

Fine-leaf fescues (creeping red, 'Flyer', 'Boreal', 'Chewings', etc.) have a thin leaf and fine texture. They are more shade tolerant but less wear and heat tolerant than tall fescue. Fine fescue is not recommended for Georgia except in shaded areas in the mountain region.

### SOIL PREPARATION - NEW LAWNS

1. Kill all weeds by spraying the area with a non-selective weed killer containing glyphosate (RoundUp, etc.) two weeks before planting.
2. Till the soil thoroughly to a depth of six inches, mixing in lime and fertilizer according to soil test results. Slope the soil away from buildings to prevent water collection in unwanted areas.
3. Rake the area smooth, removing rocks, clumps and grassy debris.
4. Roll the area with a water-filled roller to reveal low spots.
5. Fill low spots with soil.
6. Rake lightly and plant.

### DISEASE CONTROL

Most lawn diseases are caused by poor cultural practices. Overwatering is most often the culprit.

1. Irrigate after midnight and before noon, allowing the grass to dry before nightfall.
2. Correct disease identification is a must before a fungicide is applied. Call your local Extension office (1-800-ASKUGA-1) for assistance and advice.

### INSECT CONTROL

A healthy, vigorously growing lawn can absorb a great deal of insect pressure without lasting harm.

1. Identify insects or grubs before applying an insecticide. Call your local Extension office for advice.
2. Treatment for white grub control is not necessary unless more than 12 per square foot are found in irrigated turf.

### SOIL TESTING (more details at [www.georgiasoiltest.com](http://www.georgiasoiltest.com))

1. Use a clean trowel and plastic bucket. In an area to be tested, take a deep, hearty scoop of soil (a *plug*) from ten randomly selected spots. A plug should be four to six inches deep. Place the plugs in the bucket.
2. Mix the plugs together in the bucket. Remove grass, twigs, stones, etc. This is a representative sample of all of the soil in a particular area.
3. Call your local County Extension office (1-800-ASKUGA-1). They will give you details on how to bring a soil sample to them. There is a nominal charge, in the range of \$4.00 to \$8.00, for each sample.
4. The University of Georgia Soils Laboratory will test your soil and send you a written report on the nutrients it contains. The acidity (pH) of the soil will also be noted. Fertilizer recommendations and schedules are included, along with the amount of lime needed by your soil.