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Sowing & Growing: Bentgrass



Bentgrass (*Agrostis capillaris*) is a traditional perennial grass with fine leaves. A long term species often most prevalent on heavier and wetter soils.

It is sometimes known as ’golf green’ grass and is commonly used in lawns and golf courses in the amenity sector. It can also be used as a component in wildflower or environmental seed mixtures as it is not aggressive and therefore does not crowd out delicate wildflower species.

When to sow: Common bentgrass should be sown from March to September, try to sow in warm conditions as this species can be slow to establish.

Preparation: Sowing on a fine seed bed, with good moisture and ground conditions will speed up germination and establishment.

Sowing: A fine but firm seedbed should be created. Care should be taken to remove any weeds from the area. Once sown, the area should be lightly raked over to cover the seed and well consolidated with a roller or similar seed to encourage maximum seed to soil contact and conserve moisture. Seeds beds should not be left unconsolidated and if you leave a footprint on a newly sown area it should be rolled again

Management: If practical, try to water newly sown area during dry conditions to maximise germination, once the seedlings have enough anchorage not to be plucked from the ground by a simple 'pluck' test, aim to mow the area on a high setting to remove the top 1/3 of growth and encourage new plants to tiller out and start filling the sward.

The Bentgrass Name Conundrum!

When it comes to bentgrass we often have queries over whether highland, common and browntop bent are the same. They are all very similar, looking almost identical in appearance and all used regularly in amenity mixtures.

They don’t share the same Latin name which can add to the confusion. This is because as the bent family has developed, they have become recognised as different species.

Highland and common were both formerly described as browntop bent (Agrostis tenuis) but have now been given separate names, denoting the separate sub-species. The Latin name for highland bent is Agrostis castellana, while common bent is Agrostis capillaris.

Traditionally, highland bent was the only bentgrass available for fine turf. The introduction of the sub-species browntop bent has offered improved density, durability, disease resistance and ability to withstand close mowing.

All three bents are often used in conjunction to give the finest finishes on a lawn or golf course.

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