

# AZURE

## BLUE SHEEPS FESCUE

### BREEDER

Rutgers University and Blue Moon Farms

### DESCRIPTION

Azure sheep's fescue is an extremely fine bladed bunchgrass that produces a dense sward and distinct deep teal blue colored turf. Azure establishes rapidly from seed, yet is one of the slowest growing grasses commercially available. Azure exhibits drought and arid climate heat tolerance and has a unique dehydration avoidance mechanism allowing it to remain green under drought stress induced dormancy. Its deep blue teal color intensifies under heat and drought stress.

### APPLICATION

Azure was bred specifically for improved shade tolerance, tolerance to infertile soils and reduced maintenance conditions. Azure is best adapted in northern regions of the temperate cool-season turfgrass adaptation zone where heat and humidity related diseases are minimized. It can be successfully utilized in full sun or shade, in parks, playgrounds, commercial sites, golf course roughs and wild flower and native seed mixtures. In poly species mixtures Azure is compatible in turfgrass mixtures containing Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, colonial bentgrass, other fine fescues and wildflower and native grasses, legumes and forbs.

### SEEDING

**Dates:** Spring and fall when soil temperatures are above 60°F or higher. Fine fescue is generally slow to tiller once germinated, so higher soil temperatures and increasing photoperiod in the spring or warm soils with decreasing photoperiod in the fall provide an optimal environment for seedling establishment.

**Rates:** 4.0-5.0 lbs./1,000 ft.sq. Seed count of Azure is generally 680,000 seeds per pounds and dependent on the year of harvest, location of production and seed production practices.

**Depth:** Sow at ¼ to ½ inch.



### TURF CHARACTERISTICS

Growth Habit	Estab. Rate days	LHC Tol. ½"	Mowing Freq.	Traffic Tol.	Thatch prod	Comp Mix	N. Req.	Shade Tol.	Cold Tol.	Drought Tol.	Et rate mm/day	Endophyte	Salinity Tol. mmhos
Bunch	Slow 21-28	Good	2x month	Poor	Low	Excellent	Low	Good	Very good	Very Good	Med 7-8	No	<3 poor

*LHC=low height of cut, ET=evapotranspiration, N=nitrogen \*per 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>; rates may increase or decrease based on location, soil type, irrigation practices, desired turf quality, humidity & other abiotic and biotic factors.*



## CULTURAL PRACTICES

**Soil preparation:** Prepare firm seed bed free of clods, sticks and vegetative debris. Seed should be in contact with soil. Fine fescues are intolerant of poorly drained soils.

**pH:** Should be slightly acidic, 6.5 or less, for favorable growth.

**NPK requirement:** Of the cool-season grasses used for turf, fine fescues are more tolerant of infertile, dry soils and often predominate where there is competition from trees and shrubs for nutrients and moisture. For this reason, fine fescue is an excellent choice for low maintenance turf. Fine fescue may not perform well during hot, humid summers, particularly if they are over fertilized, grown in poorly drained soils or mowed too closely.

**Water use:** Sheep fescue is recognized as a dehydration resistant and tolerant species (Beard, 1986) with improved drought tolerance. An ET rate of 7-8 mm per day is the best among the cool-season turfgrass species.

**Thatch management:** The dense bunch type growth habit of sheep fescue provides opportunities for development of thatch. Verticutting, tight mowing and dethatching are recommended

for dormant sod or for grass breaking dormancy in the spring. During any dethatching never remove more than ½ an inch of thatch. If a thatch layer of greater than one inch exists, removal must be done over a period of years.

**Mowing height:** Azure is unique among fine fescue species. Azure should be mowed to standard mowing heights for fine fescue of 1.0-2.5 inches.

**Weed control:** (from NCSU Pest Control Recommendations for Turfgrass Managers, 2003) For general broadleaf control in established turf: 2, 4-D+dicamba, 2, 4-D+MCP, 2, 4-D+MCP+dicamba, 2, 4-D+2, 4-DP and others. Pre-emergent herbicides to control annual grassy weeds in established turf: *benflin* (Balan), *bensulide* (Pre-Far), *dithiopyr+trifluralin*, *pendimethalin* (Pre-M), *proflam* (Barricade), Post-emergence herbicides for annual grassy weeds *dithiopyr* and *fenoxaprop*. *Sethoxydim* (Poast) and *fluazifop* (Fusilade) are used as broad spectrum herbicides to control broadleaf and annual grassy weeds in fine fescue seed production fields of Oregon.

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