

Introduction



It is estimated that there are around 620 genera and 10,000 species of grasses to be found in the world. Grass plants are used extensively and utilised throughout the globe for many different reasons and have adapted themselves to all the differing world climates and zones. Many grasses are used for food, in fact, it is said that 20% of the worlds cultivated land is planted with wheat, barley, rye or rice. Yes, rice is included in the grass order.

Grasses, even though you may think they all have similar appearances, are as diverse as we are. Many genus (main breeds) of the grass family are utilised in horticulture for aesthetic and ornamental reasons and many are utilised in sports turf to allow us to play our recreational games upon or utilise for our pastimes. Nevertheless, perhaps the most extensive managed use of grasses in the United Kingdom can be attributed to those areas called 'lawns'.

As far back as medieval times, it was discovered that grass seeds and turfs from pastures were an economical and easy way to beautify space around buildings or to cover soils in the landscape. Since then, grassed areas have fulfilled a multitude of different functions.

Grasses are pleasing to the eye, provide an appropriate surface for play and sport, provide life-giving oxygen, allow stabilisation of soils and provide employment and enjoyment. The lawned area, forming part of the suburban garden, complement planting schemes, define and balance height, texture and colour while also forming part enclosure, sun lounge, sports pitch and pet run. Grasses are even used simply to encourage time spent outside. Overall, grasses are common, popular and a fact of life.... but, it could be said, for lawned areas, rarely managed in the correct manner!