

THE TURFGRASS CERTIFICATION PROCESS

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You've done it! You've made the decision to renovate your turfgrass area. One of the most important steps in renovation is obtaining quality plant material. This document serves as a basic guideline for choosing quality planting material and being aware of the different options available on the market.

WHAT IS CERTIFIED PLANT MATERIAL?

Plant material goes through several certification processes when it is released from the original breeder. When a turfgrass is released from a breeder, it is placed on a patent. While it is under patent, it must be licensed to seed companies and/or sod growers through a licensing process and also go through the certification process. The certification process involves the Texas Department of Agriculture conducting site visits to "certify" the plant material. Site visits are done at sod farms or seed companies to ensure there are no "off-types" or contaminations from other plants. Once the material has been certified, it may come with a tag to indicate the certification class depending on the type of plant material. However, once the patent has expired then it is up to the individual companies/growers to certify the material through the Texas Department of Agriculture, if they wish to do so. When the patent expires, a license is no longer required to grow the material as there are no legal rules in place. While most growers strive to produce a quality product true to the cultivar, certification adds added assurance to the consumer. Purchasing certified plant material ensures that the cultivar of turfgrass is as-expected with the desired traits that the client is looking for without significant contamination by other cultivars or weeds. Conversely, non-certified material will not offer the same quality assurances, but will sometimes be a good fit for projects with a more limited budget.

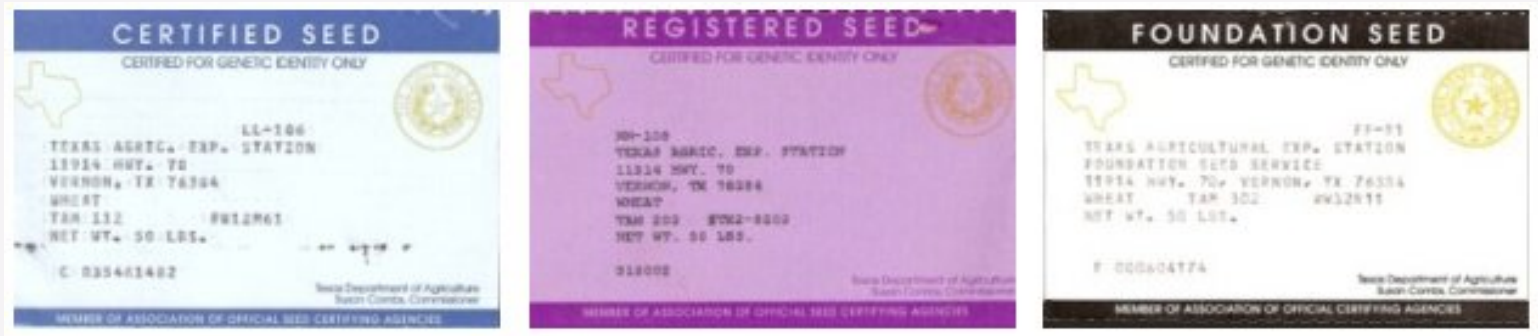


Figure 1: Certification Classes in Texas. Photo Cred: Texas A&M AgriLife Foundation Seed

Figure 1 shows three examples of certified seed tags used in the state of Texas. The color and certification class on each tag will indicate how many generations away from the original seeded cultivar developed by the plant breeder.

- Breeder Class: No Tag
- Foundation Class: White Tag: One generation away from breeder
- Registered Class: Purple Tag: Two generations away from breeder
- Certified Class: Blue Tag: Three generations away from breeder

The certified class is generally the material that is available to the public for purchase. Information provided on the seed certification tag must include class of certification, kind of crop, variety, lot number, and name and address of the owner. The lot number will allow the end-user to trace the plant material to the original grower and field. This is important for contamination and inaccurate plant material issues that may arise.

SOD CERTIFICATION

While sod goes through the same certification process as seed, a certification tag generally does not come with certified sod. Each individual farm will have turfgrass cultivars that may be at different stages of the certification and/or patent process. Consumers should inquire with each sod farm to learn about different options for certified plant material.

WHERE CAN I GET CERTIFIED PLANT MATERIAL?

When looking for certified seed, always look for the certification tag as well as an analysis of what is in the bag. This may include weed seed, other crops, or inert matter. The certification tag is going to assure the consumer that seed has met standards of germination and purity testing and that seed is quality.

For more information on the seed certification process, please visit:
<https://tfss.tamu.edu/for-buyers/seed-certification/>.

For more information on where to get sod in Texas, please visit:
www.texasgrass.com.

For more information on regulatory programs from the Texas Department of Agriculture, please visit:
<https://www.texasagriculture.gov/RegulatoryPrograms.aspx>



Photo Cred: Turfgrass Producers of Texas



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TURFGRASS MANAGEMENT, PLEASE VISIT AGGIETURF.TAMU.EDU OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT.

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