Turf production begins with grass, not just any grass, but rather a grass species, and more often a variety of that species, and sometimes mixtures containing several grass species and varieties. Thus, gaining knowledge of the grasses adapted for turf use is an essential preparation, either for conducting intensive studies or for strengthening a casual interest in growing and managing turf.

The grass family (or Gramineae) contains over 5,000 species of which 1,400 or more are found within the borders of the continental U.S. It is the most valuable family of flowering plants known to man. It includes all major cereal grains (wheat, oats, barley, rye, rice, millet, sorghum, and corn), sugarcane, bamboo, and numerous forage grasses utilized in livestock production for grazing and conserved feed. The grasses also provide sources of many other products ranging from paper to perfume. They are extremely important in stabilizing the soil and for reducing the harmful effects of water and wind erosion. The relatively few species adapted for turf use (less than 25 according to accepted classification systems) have one characteristic in common, namely, the ability to tolerate mowing at regular intervals. Similarly, many undesirable weedy grasses have a high tolerance to close, frequent mowing.

The grasses in Table 1 appear in alphabetical order under their technical or botanical names and are cross-referenced to the accepted common names. Common names are often uncertain in their application, with different plants bearing the same name or the same plant having different names in different locations. Language differences among countries add further confusion to the correct use of common plant names. It is for these reasons that systematic botanists rely on Latin in naming and identifying plants. The Latin name is followed by the authority (or authorities) credited with naming the species, e.g., *Poa pratensis* L. (The L. refers to Linnaeus, who published *Species Plantarum* in 1753.)

In the U.S. a fair degree of uniformity prevails in the common names applied to cultivated grasses. Credit for this uniformity can be