

# Facts about grasses

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There are over 10,000 types of grass in the world.

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Humans eat about 35 different types of grass including wheat, barley, oats, rye, rice, sugarcane, corn and wheat.

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70% of the world's farm land is used to grow grasses of various types.

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Grasses can grow in all kinds of habitats, including savannas, steppe, meadows, prairies, tundra and paddy fields.

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The cut-grass smell so many people love is actually the smell of the grass calling for help. When damaged, for example by an animal nibbling on it, the grass releases a chemical called hexanal, which tells other grass around it that there is danger around and that they need to draw their sugars down to their roots. This smell also attracts predators, i.e. birds that can then attack the invading insects and thereby save the grass.

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When grass is 'attacked' it draws all its sugars into its roots to protect itself.

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The leaves of grass are full of silica – the main ingredient in glass. When insects try to eat these leaves, the sharp crystals feel to the insects as a mouth full of sand might feel to us, but they can also damage an insects mouth forever.

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Humans shouldn't eat grass – it's not toxic, but the silica will damage our teeth too – which is why cows can eat grass. Their teeth grow and grow.

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Agnes Chase was a self-taught scientist who travelled around much of the world, drawing the different types of grass. She published her last book at 93 years old – the book recorded 80,000 types of grasses!

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The best way to 'rewild' an area is to just leave it. Don't weed, mow or tidy. It'll quickly grow grass which will attract insects and other animals.