

Lawn Seeding Care

Grass, like any other living plant, will thrive when planted properly in the right location. Many of us think grass seed will grow by simply throwing it on the lawn and walking away. For winter seeding, this is mostly true. But for fall or spring seeding it is not. Here is a step-by-step way to successfully reseed your lawn.

Spot-Seeding Bare Spots

1. Take a steel rake and loosen soil.
2. Apply seed with applicator or by hand at the rate of 4/5 seeds per inch (freeze grass seed overnight for faster germination).
3. Dampen down daily until seed germinates (a light application of straw is optional).
4. After germination, deep water the new grass once a week (to the equivalent of 1") during dry periods.
5. Mow as soon as new grass reaches 2 ¼" or more. Cut to a height of 2". Raise mower ½" after 4 cuttings of new grass.

Seeding New or Reseeding Existing Lawn Do's and Don'ts

- **Don't** rototill the soil. This process causes the soil to settle unevenly, wakes up thousands of weed seeds that will compete with the new grass, and it's a lot of unnecessary work.
- **Don't** apply topsoil to overall area unless you spread it to a depth of 4" to 6" to the entire area. Use topsoil to fill in any low areas. Settle the new topsoil with irrigation or rain before putting down your seed. Re-loosen the top soil with a steel rake to break up the crust, then put down your seed.
- **Don't** read any further unless you can keep new seed dampened down daily until germination (assuming no rain on a given day). Try the winter seed method if this seems like too much trouble.
- **Do** kill all existing vegetation in the area to be reseeded. Weeds and other vegetation should be watered well prior to application of herbicide. Healthy weeds die faster. In the fall, allow 3 to 4 weeks to retreat some weeds that regrow after initial treatment. Old law should be between 2" to 3" tall when treating, especially true with nutgrass. A great vegetation killer that is safe to use is Killzall.
- **Do** rent a seed slitter or verti-slicer. Set the blade to cut a ½" slit. Run the machine east to west and north to south (checkerboard). Most machines come with a seed box. If so, set the seeder to drop 4-5 seeds per inch of soil. For Turf Fescue and Turf Rye, make another couple of passes northeast and southwest.
- **Do** freeze your seed overnight. It can even stay frozen until you're ready to apply. Do it now before you forget.

- **Do** wait until old vegetation starts to turn yellow or brown. Then use a verti-slicer or verti-cutter. Move the machine east to west and south to north. Do crisscross. For sloped areas, move machine horizontally across slope. All slits should be ½" deep in soil.
- **Do** fertilize with a starter type fertilizer (example: 9-18-18). Do not mix the seed and fertilizer together in the same applicator hopper. Apply fertilizer first.
- **Do** lightly water grass seed daily (assuming rainless days) to keep seed moist until germination. Then water once weekly, the equivalent of 1" of water, and/or rain. Continue to water as above during dry and hot weather.
- **Do** mow your grass as soon as it reaches 2 ¼". Mow at 2" and mow often. The more cuttings, the quicker the new grass matures. You will get a few new weeds. Do not apply weed killer until you've given the new grass 3 cuttings.
- **Do** use good grass seed. If you're going to do all these steps, don't mess it up with so-called bargain seeds. Check the label for purity, weed seed content, and inert ingredients.

Lawn Notes

1. The best feedings for your lawn (all types):
 - Early September – High nitrogen
 - Late November – High nitrogen
 - Spring (March) – ½ rate nitrogen
2. Leave grass clippings. They continue to feed the lawn. (Exception: tall clippings due to rainy periods). Collect those that would clump and smother grass plants.
3. Choose grass varieties that fit your maintenance schedule:
 - Bluegrass – High maintenance
 - Perennial grass – Medium maintenance
 - Turf-type fescue – Low maintenance
4. Winter seeding is a great way to go if you can't fall seed. In mid-February to early March, go out and remove any fallen leaves and twigs from areas to be reseeded. Apply your seed to those areas (4/5 per inch) and go back and watch TV. Freezing and thawing occurs, causing the seed to have a natural seed bed. Seed will germinate in spring when soil warms to proper germination temperature. Remember do NOT apply any lawn pre-emergent to the areas you winter seeded until the seed has germinated to a minimum of 2" high otherwise it will not come up.
5. For spring and fall seedings, straw helps to hold moisture around seed, but straw does not replace moisture. You will have to water daily. If you decide on straw, a bale should cover 2,000 square feet. This is a very light application. If done according to above, no straw removal is necessary as straw will decompose by itself. The prime time to seed your lawn is September 1st through October 15th so do it in the fall if you can!

Do I feed first or seed first?

An easy question to ask, even easier to answer. When putting down lawn food and grass seed the same day, always put down the fertilizer first so you're not walking on the grass seed any more than you have to.