



Fall Renovation of Cool-season Turfgrass

- September is the ideal time to begin the renovation and reinvigoration of your cool-season lawn. Cooler temperatures and shorter days set up the right conditions for seed germination and autumn showers encourage root growth.
- Shady lawn areas will need to be seeded in early September due to leaf drop later in the fall. Fallen leaves impede seedling growth and raking pulls up tender shoots.
- If the early September window is missed, wait to seed shady lawn areas until March. Crabgrass does not grow in shade, so in this case, applying pre-emergent herbicides will not interfere with seeding in the spring.

prior to seeding

- If herbicides are needed to eradicate broad leaf weeds, spray at least two weeks prior to seeding. Otherwise, hand pull.
- Two or three days before seeding, water the lawn if needed to soften the soil. Mow the lawn down to 2" - lower than usual!
- Next, top dress with compost and/or Turface to enrich soil, aid root penetration and help prevent compaction. Working with a rake in small areas, evenly spread it about ½" thick, which is about 1.5 cubic yards per 1000 square feet of lawn.
- Apply an organic starter fertilizer which is usually higher in phosphorous to help root development (3-6-3).

seeding your lawn

- Choose a seed mix with more than one variety, preferably 3-6 varieties for diversification, such as our favorite: George's Magic Mix – available for sun, shade or high traffic areas.
- Sunny lawn mixes usually include tall type fescue grasses, bluegrass and perennial rye. Be sure to avoid annual rye, which is short lived and a cheap filler. Also avoid K-31 tall fescue which is coarse and clump-forming.
- Seed mixes for shade should be used for areas of the lawn that will receive less than 4-6 hours of sun.
- If your lawn includes both sunny areas and shade areas, use a sun mix in the overlapping border areas. The fine fescues of a shade mix won't tolerate sun, but a sun mix will do okay in the shade.
- If you are over-seeding, you will need about ½ pound of seed per 100 square feet or about 3-5 pounds for an average lawn.
- If you are starting from scratch on completely bare ground, use 1 pound per 100 square feet, averaging 6-10 pounds.
- If you have bare spots, concentrate your seeding more heavily there, lighter where you are over-seeding.

aeration

- A key element of soil preparation is using a core aerator to loosen the soil and aid in seed-to-soil connection.
- Ideally make two or three passes with the aerator, working amendments and seed into the soil.
- Alternatively, use a slit-seeder which tills the soil at the same time it adds fertilizer and sows grass seed.

caring for your newly seeded lawn

- Keep soil evenly moist, but not wet. For the first two weeks unless it rains, water every morning (5:00-7:00 am) for about 10-15 minutes, adding a second short watering before the sun goes down if it is hot, windy or your new lawn is on a slope.
- After two to three weeks, mow at 3½", bagging the clippings. Reduce watering to two to four days per week.
- Until the lawn is fully established, mow with the highest mower setting, preferably bagging the clippings. Using a blower, keep fallen leaves from covering a newly seeded lawn.