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Seeding A Lawn

Preparing to seed a new lawn calls for many of the same steps as sodding. The key tasks you will undertake are:

- Selecting the right seed
- Preparing the ground
- Planting
- Watering

Selecting Your Lawn Seed

Grass seed is available in a variety of blends that are designed to suit different purposes. You can find a blend made especially for shady areas, for play areas that take hard use, that require less water, or that will give the deepest blue green color. In selecting your seed, it is important to pay attention to the Crop and Weed figures on the label. Doing so will protect you from actually planting thousands of weed and other undesirable seeds along with your grass seed. Crop tells you what percentage of the seed is a different variety that's not supposed to be in this mix. Weed tells you what percentage is actually weed seed. Your best choice is a seed that shows 0 Crop and 0 Weed content. How important is this? When you consider that there are 2 1/2 million seeds in one pound of bluegrass, just a .05% weed content means you would be planting 1,250 weed seeds with each pound of bluegrass!

Ground Preparation

This is where the majority of your work comes in when planting a lawn. There are several steps to follow when preparing your planting site:

- Clear the area
- Add compost and Rototill
- Install sprinklers
- Grade the area
- Seed

Step 1: Clear the area

Clear the area to be planted of all debris, including rocks over 1 inch diameter. Smaller rocks are OK and, in fact, improve drainage. If you have persistent weeds such as crabgrass or Bermuda grass, chemical herbicides like Roundup can be used to help sterilize the area (consult directions for proper use).



Step 2: Rototill and compost

The soil should be rototilled to a depth of 4 to 6 inches. For the long-term health of your lawn, mix in an organic landscape or planting mix to help loosen the soil. A 1/3 compost to 2/3 native soil (6 yards compost to 1,000 square feet) is recommended to ensure a long lasting lawn. Spread the compost evenly over the entire seeding area, then rototill it in. Level the area, smoothing out high and low spots.





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STEP 3: INSTALL SPRINKLER SYSTEM

An automatic sprinkler system is invaluable in germinating your new lawn and in handling ongoing watering needs. In the first month, your lawn may need to be watered several times a day to keep the area moist as the seeds germinate. Later, the best watering times are early in the morning (4 to 5 a.m.) when heat and wind speeds are low. Thus, automatic irrigation timers are a valuable tool.

Additionally, in order to have a consistent color and growth rate throughout your lawn, uniform watering coverage is a must. This is very difficult to achieve with hand watering systems. After your automatic sprinklers are installed, the areas covering the trenches should be jetted with water to reduce future problems with sinking and settling.

STEP 4: GRADE THE AREA

Do a final grading of the lawn area. It should be smooth and level, without low spots or dips that may fill with water. All run off should flow away from the house. Dirt should be 1/2 inch below lawn border.

STEP 5: PLANTING

Planting involves the distribution of fertilizer, then the lawn seed, and finally top dressing. Just prior to spreading seed, a pre plant fertilizer should be distributed over the top of the soil. These starter fertilizers have a high phosphorous level that helps establish a strong root system. Now, sow the grass seed. Soil temperatures of at least 50 degrees Fahrenheit will give you the best success. Use a spreader with controls for seeding, instead of broadcasting the seed by hand. A spreader distributes the seed evenly over the ground, giving you correct, consistent coverage without waste. Check your spreader directions and seed label for the proper coverage rates.



After distributing the seed, cover the area with a very thin layer (1/8 inch) of potting soil or peat moss, using a roller type top dresser. This applies the correct thickness of material to help keep the seed moist with consistency across the entire lawn. Hand distribution of top-dressing results in uneven coverage some too thick, some too thin and thus, uneven germination of your lawn.

STEP 6: WATERING

Seed needs three things to germinate: light, warmth and moisture. Your part in applying water correctly plays a large role in how successful your lawn germination will be. On planting, apply 1 inch of water, saturating the soil to a depth of 8 inches in two waterings. After the initial watering, change to a 1/4 inch application per watering, saturating the soil to a depth of 2 inches. Do not allow the seed to entirely dry out



once you have begun applying water. In hot weather, this may mean watering 4 or more times a day. In cooler weather, or when it rains, you can cut back on your watering. The key point is to not skimp on the watering when the seed is germinating. Do not apply the water all at once; instead, use multiple waterings. If some areas appear to be coming up bare, you can overseed these areas and apply some hand watering.

STEP 7: MOWING

When your new grass reaches a height of about 3 inches, it's time for your first mowing. Set the mower height between 2 and 2 1/2 inches so you are cutting off no more than 1/3 of the leaf blade. About 45 days after planting, start your regular maintenance fertilization program. See Grass Farm literature on lawn maintenance for further instructions or visit our "Helpful Tips" page on our website at www.grassfarm.com.

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