



# ESTABLISHING A LAWN WITH GRASS SEED

Whether you renovate your entire lawn, spot seed, or just touch up thin areas, the key to success is planning, preparation and follow up after germination.

In Kansas City, the best month to seed cool season grasses like fescue and bluegrass is in September and no later than early October. You want every day possible for grass to develop the root system prior to summer stress. Fall is when Mother Nature works in our favor which is especially true for seeding in heavy shaded areas; the heavier the shade, the more important to seed in early September.

## **PREPARE THE SOIL**

If you have more than ½ inch of thatch in small areas, it should be removed with a steel rake or Garden Weasel. You may need to rent a dethatching machine for larger areas. If thatch is less than ½ inch, you don't need to remove it, BUT the top ½-1 inch of soil (not thatch) still needs to be loose. If you have hard compacted soil, core aerating is a great practice because it breaks up the soil and loosens the seed bed. Before you begin this important step, water the area a day or two before but don't flood it. You need just a little bit of moisture to make the ground easier to work.

## **APPLY THE SEED AND STARTER FERTILIZER**

Once the ground is loose, apply the seed AND **Ferti-lome New Lawn Starter**. A starter fertilizer is high in phosphorus (the middle number on the bag) and germinating grass seed has a high demand for this nutrient. A starter fertilizer is only used when seeding and not for any other routine fertilization. Also consider applying **Natural Guard Humic-** a soil amendment that improves nutrient uptake.

## **SEED TO SOIL CONTACT IS CRITICAL**

Simply throwing seed on top of bare ground does not work. Seed must be lightly covered by soil- for smaller areas, hand apply black peat to a depth of around ¼ inch or use a Garden Weasel to loosen soil, spread the seed, then go back over lightly with the Weasel. On areas with slight slopes use "Seed Aide". For larger areas another way to do this is by core aerating, with a machine, preferably in 2 directions, then seed and fertilize. The seed germinates in the aerator holes and comes up like little plugs, filling in over time. It's a neat trick and especially good if you have compacted soil.

## **WATER!!!!**

Once the above steps are done, it's time to water. **Seed MUST be kept moist at all times prior to germination.** Depending on the type of grass and soil temperature, germination can take anywhere from 5 days to 2 weeks. This may require watering 1x to 4x per day but the top inch or so of soil must stay wet.

After the seed has germinated, **DO NOT QUIT WATERING!!** Shutting off the water at this stage is one of the most common reasons for failure. You can reduce the frequency of watering to every second or third day but you need to increase the watering depth to 4-6 inches. If grass starts to wilt, then it needs water. If you are not sure of the water depth, simply take a small shovel and dig out a soil profile to check soil moisture. It's easy to do and only takes a minute. If possible, water in the morning but in any case, don't let the root system dry out. Once the grass is 3 inches tall, mow it to 2 inches and repeat this schedule for the first 2-3 times then mow to regular cutting height. This will help grass spread (tiller) into bare areas.

## **FOLLOW UP FERTILIZATION**

Roughly 2-4 weeks after germination, the grass will be hungry for more fertilizer, especially nitrogen. Use **Ferti-Lome Lawn Food + Iron**, not a starter fertilizer.

Depending on the time of application you will most likely need one last fertilization with a "winterizer- also known as a "dormant feed". This is applied in late October or early November when growth slows but grass is still green. This is a very important application to prepare your grass for the following spring and summer.

If seeding in spring, fertilize with Milorganite either at seeding or 2-4 weeks after germination.

## Soil Service Garden Center, Inc.

*"Kansas City's One-Stop Garden Shop"* Since 1934



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## **SELECT THE BEST SEED FOR YOUR LAWN**

**KC Marathon**.....combines the KC Endurance blend of “turf-type” tall fescues with 10% Kentucky bluegrass to provide a seed mix population of 50% fescue and 50% bluegrass. This is a good choice for higher traffic situations as the bluegrass helps with spreading/filling in bare spots, and makes an excellent lawn all around.

**KC Endurance**.....blends four varieties of “turf-type” tall fescues with finer blades and rich color. This is an excellent choice from full sun to shade. The multiple seed varieties are good for larger bare ground areas when genetic variation is best for disease, shade and drought tolerance.

**Superblue Blend**..... combines the best varieties of bluegrass to produce the most beautiful lawn with outstanding color and fine leaf texture.

**Shady Lawn**..... special mix for high shade areas only with very fine leaf blades- requires TLC in hot summer months.

<u><b>Seed</b></u>	<u><b>Rates/1000 sq. ft.</b></u>	<u><b>Scotts Edgeguard Broadcast Spreader Setting</b></u>
<b>KC Marathon</b>	bare ground -7 lb. thin- 3 ½ lb.	#12 for 4lbs of seed
<b>KC Endurance</b>	bare ground – 8 lb. thin- 4 lb.	#12 for 4lbs of seed
<b>Superblue Blend</b>	bare ground- 2 lb. thin- 1 lb.	#3 for 1.5lbs of seed
<b>Shady Lawn</b>	bare ground- 3 lb. thin- 1 ½ lb.	#5 for 1.5lbs of seed

**NOTE-** If seeding areas in shade, a lighter seeding rate is better than a heavier rate. For example, apply about 6 lb. /1000 sq. ft. of KC Marathon or KC Endurance in bare ground shady areas.

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