



GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL LAWN SEEDING

Whether you seed large bare areas, 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, because you want every day possible for grass to develop the root system prior to the following summer stress. This is the time of year when Mother Nature works in our favor and especially true for seeding in heavy shade areas.

PREPARING THE SOIL

- If you have more than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of thatch, it should be removed by hand using a steel rake, or for larger areas, a dethatching machine. If thatch is less than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, you don't need to remove it, BUT the ground 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 2 before but don't flood it. You just need a little bit of moisture to make the ground easier to work.

APPLY THE SEED AND FERTILIZER

- Once the ground is loose, apply the seed AND A STARTER FERTILIZER. 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 at seeding and not for any other routine fertilization. Also consider applying Natural Guard Soil Activator at this time. Soil Activator is not a fertilizer, but rather a soil amendment that improves the uptake of nutrients.

SEED TO SOIL CONTACT IS CRITICAL

- Simply throwing seed on top of bare ground does not work. Seed must be lightly covered by soil or for smaller areas, hand applying black peat to a depth of around $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. There is one other way to do this if seeding with fescue (not bluegrass), and that is by core aerating preferably in 2 directions, then seed and fertilize. The fescue will germinate in the aerator holes and come up like little plugs, then fill 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 2-3 times 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 3-4 inches at least. If the 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.

FOLLOW UP FERTILIZATION

- Roughly 2-4 weeks after germination, the grass will be hungry for more fertilizer, especially nitrogen. Use a regular fertilizer and not the starter fertilizer. We have several products in stock that will work for this step.
- Depending on the time of application above 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 and a very important application to prepare your grass for the following spring and summer.

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