



# NORTHERN *Gardener* CREATING & CARING FOR YOUR ENVIRONMENT

## **Establishing New Lawns and Reseeding Existing Lawns**

Whether you are establishing a new lawn or reseeding an existing one, following a few simple steps will insure success. Proper soil preparation is just as important as the type of seed selected and fertilization. No special tools are required and in most cases the average homeowner has the equipment in their garage already.

### **CARING FOR YOUR ENVIRONMENT**

- ✓ A thick, healthy, well maintained lawn prevents soil erosion, filters contaminants from rainwater, and absorbs many types of airborne pollutants like dust and soot.
- ✓ Grass is highly efficient at converting carbon dioxide into oxygen, a process that helps clean the air.



### **Selecting Seed**

Kentucky Bluegrass, of which there are many varieties, is the king of grasses in the midwest and prefers full sun to perform best. The fescues, of which there are many varieties, are very durable grasses with the fine leaved types being quite shade tolerant. Mixtures are available containing both, which allows the dominate one to take hold and perform the best in certain areas of your lawn. Many times you will see either perennial rye or annual rye included in the mixture. These grasses are there to perform as a nurse grass by germinating and growing quickly to protect the desirable grasses until they have become established.

Bluegrasses may take as long as 14 days to germinate whereas annual rye may be up in as little as 2 days. Nurse grasses are not long lived. Annual rye will only last one growing season, whereas perennial rye will usually last 2 growing seasons.

Most grass seed is available as a mixture of bluegrass, fescue, and ryegrass. A general rule of thumb is to use 4 pounds per 1000 square feet for a new (or bare) area. If overseeding, use 2 pounds per 1000 square feet.



## Timing

Mid-August to mid-September is the best time to seed a lawn. Spring is the next best time to establish a lawn. Good results can also be obtained in the summer if careful watering practices are followed. These are also the best times to sod a lawn.

## Establishing A New Lawn

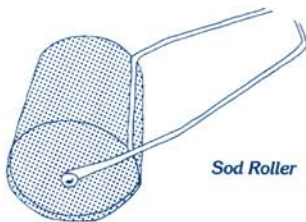
The soil preparation for seeding and sodding are identical. Use a rototiller, preferably a rear tine tiller, to go over the area to be seeded.

Go first in one direction and then again at right angles, tilling 4 to 5 inches in depth. Rake out stones and other debris, leveling as much as possible. Using a roller, (1/3 or less full of water) roll the entire bed until you do not sink more than an 1/2 inch when walking on it.

Apply a lawn fertilizer following label directions and rake it into the soil. When seeding or sodding, it may be advisable to use a fertilizer that contains phosphorus (the middle number of the three) If fertilizing an established lawn, many new regulations state you may not apply a fertilizer containing phosphorus, unless an approved soil test shows a deficiency in phosphorus. Contact your local municipality for the regulations as they apply to your area.

If seeding use either a drop or broadcast spreader. If neither of these are available, seed may be hand seeded using a sweeping motion to get an even distribution. This technique requires a little practice.

After seeding is completed, rake lightly to fluff up the soil and to mix in the seed. Approximately 10% of the seed should be visible. Apply a light mulch of clean straw. If clean straw is not available do not apply anything. Dirty straw containing seed is more trouble than it is worth. On gradual slopes, a loose weave natural jute burlap will allow the seed to grow through and decompose eventually.



Sod Roller

Water thoroughly after seeding and continue to keep moist by watering two or three times a day for 10-20 minutes at a time until the seed is germinated. Remember that it will take up to 14 days for the bluegrasses to germinate. Once the lawn seed has germinated, decrease the frequency and increase the amount of each watering so that you are eventually providing at least one inch of water per week.

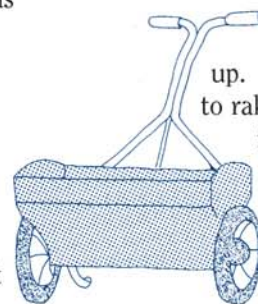
Do not mow until the grass has reached at least 3 inches. Don't mow shorter than 1 inch for the first mowing. Using a new or sharpened mower blade will help prevent damage to the young grasses. Do not apply any herbicides until the seeding has been mowed at least 3 times.

If sodding, the sod should be laid so that the edges should touch and not overlap. On slopes, the sod should be laid across the slope and stakes with sod stakes or small wood lath. Water the sod often and do not allow to dry out. As sod starts to develop roots, decrease water frequency and increase water amounts as was suggested for seeding.

## Reestablishing Existing Lawns

If you have dead spots or have lost some of your existing lawn to drought, it is not necessary to start from "scratch" to reestablish your lawn.

Using a dethatching machine or a dethatching blade attached to your lawn mower, set the machine or mower at the lowest possible setting. Let the blades dig right into the soil, pulling up thatch or dead grass. Soil will be exposed after dethatching. After you have dethatched going both



Drop Spreader

directions, rake any loose material up. If there is not much to rake don't worry about it. Reseed and rake lightly after seeding is completed. Fertilize large reseeding projects with a new lawn starter according to label directions. (SOME STUFF MISSING HERE CAN'T READ ON FAX). For a few small spots, remove existing dead vegetation, loosen the soil and don't worry about fertilizing. Seed, lightly rake it in and water. Grass seed needs to be in good soil contact for best germination. If filling a depression in the lawn, lay topsoil down first and then seed. The seed needs light for germination so don't bury it.

Follow instructions given for establishing a new lawn for watering, mowing and herbiciding directions.



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