

Steps for Successful Lawn Overseeding



WHY:

1. Repair damage to lawn.
2. Upgrade to improved varieties of same species.
3. Change grass species.

WHEN:

1. Spring – best results found between mid-April and mid-May, however there will be more weed problems, and seed germinates slower than in the fall. Late May to early June is the best time to seed buffalograss.
2. Fall – best time is mid-August through mid-September.
3. Summer – it can be done, but requires exceptional care.

WHAT: Kinds of Lawn Grass

1. Kentucky bluegrass – The highest quality lawns are usually Kentucky bluegrass. A Kentucky bluegrass lawn will be fine textured, has excellent density, dark green color, and good injury or stress recovery. Kentucky bluegrass does require the highest level of maintenance. It must be irrigated in Nebraska to stay green through the summer. Grubs, billbugs, and sod webworms are common insect pests. Rust, leaf spot, and summer patch are possible disease problems. Requires thatch management for long term survival. Price and quality vary greatly among bluegrass varieties. The biggest differences are in color, texture, density, and disease resistance. Sources of information about different grass varieties include seed companies, state extension service, and the Internet.
2. Turf-type Tall Fescue – the popularity of turf-type tall fescue has skyrocketed as turfgrass breeders have developed finer bladed, darker green tall fescue varieties. Adaptable to high or low maintenance. Advantages include drought resistant, lower fertilizer requirements, billbug and sod webworm resistance. Mow taller to take advantage of drought tolerance. Objections include its courser texture, medium green color, fast spring growth, bunch-type non-spreading growth habit, and susceptibility to brown patch fungus.
3. Fine Fescue – Creeping Red, Hard, and Chewings fescue are used in mixes with bluegrass for shade, and occasionally in low maintenance areas. These species are best adapted to shaded areas. Commonly found in ‘discount’ store mixes.
4. Buffalograss – very low maintenance compared to other grasses. Maintains good quality with very little irrigation, can be mowed as little or as often as you want, grows 6-8 inches tall maximum, and needs very little fertilizer. Buffalograss greens up late in the spring and turns brown early in the winter, has a lighter green color and a low traffic tolerance when dormant. Weeds can be a problem during establishment, but herbicides are available for grow-in success.

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HOW:

1. *Evaluate* why you need to overseed. *Fix physical problems* such as poor drainage, excessive shade, poor soil conditions, poor irrigation coverage, etc. before overseeding.
2. Spray with glyphosate or other non-selective herbicide if changing turf species. This step should be done before disturbing the existing turf stand. Follow label directed waiting period (approx. 7 days) before seeding.
3. Evaluate thatch layer. If thatch is more than three-fourths of an inch thick it should be removed before seeding. Grass seedlings do not establish well in thatch, because it is hard to wet, dries out quickly, and does not provide good contact with seed. Remove by aggressively power-raking, cutting out with sod cutter, or raking manually.
4. Mow area as short as possible, remove clippings. If using power interseeder skip steps 5-7.
5. Thoroughly power-rake and remove debris. The goal here is to thin the existing vegetation and provide seedlings room to grow.
6. Broadcast seed, then starter fertilizer. Seeding rates: bluegrass 2-3 lbs./1,000 ft²; tall fescue 6-10 lbs./1,000 ft²; buffalograss 1-3 lbs./1,000 ft². Apply starter fertilizer at rate recommended on the bag (provide 1/2 to 1 lb. Nitrogen/1,000 sq. ft. and 1 to 2 lb. Phosphorous/1,000 sq. ft.)
7. Power-rake deep and thorough again to provide good mixing of seed with the soil. Some manual raking may be necessary to smooth debris from power raking.
8. Slice in seed with interseeder (if power-rake procedure not used). Same seed and fertilizer rates as in step 6 apply.
9. Roll or pack the area to assure seed to soil contact. Especially important if power-rake was used to mix seed and soil, leaving soil fluffy on top. Use any means available such as riding lawn mower, four-wheeler, foot traffic, or a lawn roller.
10. Water as needed, lightly and frequently, to keep the soil surface damp until the new turf seedlings are 1/2 inch tall. As grass establishes reduce the irrigation frequency, and increase duration of irrigation as needed.
11. Use Drive 75WP per label instructions for crabgrass control if necessary with spring seedings.
12. Keep weeds mowed off at the height of the turf seedlings. Start by mowing short (1 inch) and raise the mowing height as the turfgrass seedlings grow and fill in.
13. Apply 2nd application of starter fertilizer about 4 - 6 weeks after emergence of turfgrass seedlings again applying 3/4 to 1 lb N/1,000 sq. ft. and 1 to 2 lbs. P/1,000 sq. ft.