



Winter Overseeding of Turfgrass

If your turfgrass is looking a little thin, weedy, and anemic, then fall/winter is the best time of year to address this problem with an overseeding program. Unlike a new turf installation which usually requires a larger budget and more work, a simple renovation can make the turf look new and refreshed.

Turfgrass professionals including golf course superintendents and sportsfield managers typically perform turf renovations in the fall/winter as the seasonal changes are ideal for establishing grass from seed.

Renovations are easy and successful if a few simple rules are followed. First, this is a good time to check your irrigation system. Many turf problems are caused by an underperforming irrigation system. It is important to run your system and check for clogged or broken sprinkler heads, or for heads that do not adequately cover the area. It is important that any sprinkler issues be corrected immediately, as optimal irrigation is essential for a successful renovation.

Once you have checked your irrigation system you can begin the renovation process. Here are the steps necessary for success:

1. Mow and remove clippings. Lower the mower to the lowest possible setting and mow the turf while removing the clippings. If the existing turf has a lot of thatch (dead material) it may be necessary to do this as a two-step process by lowering the mower a couple of

notches for the first run and then to the lowest setting on the second run. If necessary, rake to remove all clippings and thatch to insure that seed will come in direct contact with the soil. If the turf has an excessive weed problem, apply an all-purpose weed killer such as glyphosate a week before mowing.

2. Apply seed, fertilizer, and mulch. It is important to select the right type of seed for the application. If the turf is tall fescue, use a fescue blend such as Stover Triple Crown or New Millennia. On a Bermuda grass turf or any other type of turf use Stover Grand Slam Perennial Ryegrass Blend which establishes quickly and has a dark green color and fine texture. Apply seed at the rate of 8-10 pounds per 1,000 square feet using a whirly bird type of spreader. Be sure that seed is in direct contact with the soil and is not sitting on any grass clippings. If necessary drag a rake over the area to insure good seed to soil contact. Apply starter fertilizer at the recommended rate. Cover the area with a top dressing



such as Kellogg's Topper seed cover. Use a 'bird cage' or manure spreader to cover the seed going over the seeded area twice with the mulch spreader so that about ¼ inch of mulch is applied.

3. Water. Chances of success are greater if the sprinklers are on timers, or if the seeding can be timed to coincide with rainfall. Adjust the sprinkler timers to come on 3 times a day (8:00AM, Noon and 3:00PM) for about 5-7 minutes each time. It is important that water is absorbed and not allowed to puddle or run off, so adjust the timer accordingly. After the grass has germinated and established (10-14 days) gradually reduce the frequency of the watering to once a day, and then once every other day but water for longer periods. As the weather cools reduce watering even more. Eventually the lawn will only need to be watered 2-3 times per week depending on the weather.

4. Mow. When the grass is about 3 inches in height set the mower to mow no lower than 2 inches. Mowing height can be gradually lowered to between 1-2 inches but the rule of thumb is to never take off more than 1/3 of the leaf blade when mowing. Fertilize in late winter with an all-purpose fertilizer.

That's it! Another successful turf renovation!



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