



Seed & Feed

When should I spread seed?

With most lawn care projects, timing is everything. And seeding is no exception. Before starting a new lawn, be sure to properly prepare the soil (see "Soil Preparation" article) and choose a grass that will grow well in your geographical area. If you plan on seeding an existing lawn, identify the type of grass currently growing. Warm season grasses such as Bermuda, Centipede, St. Augustine and Zoysia should be seeded in early spring or late fall, depending on your location. Cool season grasses, Kentucky Bluegrass, Fescue, and Ryegrass, should be seeded in late summer through mid-October.

Should I overseed my lawn?

Overseeding is a practice normally reserved for cool season grasses, specifically Fescue, Ryegrass and Kentucky Bluegrass. These grasses have longer, finer blades and are referred to as "bunch-type" grasses. As their name implies, the blades grow in a bunch from a crown located in the center of the plant. As the grass matures over time, it produces blades at a slower pace, often resulting in a thinner lawn. Overseeding ensures new growth can outpace the maturation and dieback of older grass. The result is a thicker, more colorful lawn.

When and how should I overseed?

Overseeding should be done in late summer or early fall. This allows the grass to grow and become better established before temperatures drop too low and growth stops.

Step 1: Mow

When preparing to overseed, you should first mow. Be sure to mow lower than you normally would, as this will help ensure the seed finds the soil when you spread.

Step 2: Dethatch and Collect

After mowing, dethatch if needed and collect material from the surface of the grass.

Step 3: Aerate

If you're considering aerating your lawn, this is a prime time to do so. Plug aerating before overseeding not only helps keep grass seed from washing away, but it also helps nutrients, water and oxygen find the existing root system.

Step 4: Spread Compost or Starter Fertilizer

After aeration, you can spread compost or starter fertilizer, depending on your soil's needs (see "Soil Preparation" article).

Step 5: Spread Seed

When you're ready to start spreading seed, be sure to read the packaging carefully. Most manufacturers provide instructions on how much seed to use when overseeding. Spreading too much seed may lead to overcrowding, which can be detrimental to your lawn.

Step 6: Topdress and Water

Top-dressing your yard with compost or a topsoil blend will help improve the germination of new grass. Provide at least one inch of water a day to newly sown grass, ideally broken into multiple waterings throughout the day. Take care not to water too much. Excessive watering can cause the seeds to rot.

Should I fertilize?

Fertilizing helps promote new root and leaf growth, reduces and controls weeds and replaces much-needed nutrients. Again, depending on your soil's needs, fertilizing is a great way to keep your lawn green and healthy.

What kind of fertilizer should I use?

There are many different types of fertilizers. Which one you should choose depends on you and your soil:

- Liquid fertilizer: fast-acting, quickly absorbed, require reapplication every 2-3 weeks, generally more expensive
- Quick-release granular fertilizer: typically lasts 3-4 weeks, quick results, effective in colder weather, higher risk of grass burn
- Slow-release granular fertilizer: remains effective over 2-6 months, decreased risk of lawn burn, fewer applications needed per year, release rate heavily dependent on rainfall
- Organic fertilizers: environmentally-friendly, slower acting, can be cost-free if made from compost, difficult application

When should I fertilize?

For cool season grasses, fertilize heavily in the fall right before the grass' most vigorous growth cycle. You'll want to give the fertilizer plenty of time to become inactive before the severe cold, so be sure to time application carefully.

For warm season grasses, fertilize in the spring when grass is just beginning to green. Time your fertilization efforts to ensure it will be inactive before hot weather sets in.