

Planting a new lawn takes some preparing

A new lawn can be started by sowing seed or laying sod. In the South, lawns are often planted with living stems or sod plugs. But most lawns are seeded — especially those relying upon favorites such as Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass and fine fescue. A leaflet listing up-to-date cultivars of these species can be acquired by sending a stamped envelope to the Lawn Institute, 991 W. Fifth St., Marysville, Ohio 43040.

Whether you plant the lawn yourself, or have someone else nurse the turf through its juvenile stages (as is the case with sod), insist upon quality. The seed box label tells what kinds of grass are contained and provides other information.

Don't worry about a bit of inert (it can't hurt anything), or even an iota of weeds (these are seldom serious and most disappear when mowed). However, perennial field grasses, which are great for hay but hardly elegant in the lawn, should be minimal.

A soilbed is best cultivated for either seeding or sodding. Fertilizer should be mixed in according to need. A soil test is a good guide especially as to whether liming may be advisable and it tells phosphorus and potassium levels.

Sometimes just noticing how well the weeds are growing may be a strong clue as to fertility! If the soil is not fertile it pays to spread 10 pounds or so of a complete fertilizer for each thousand square feet of seedbed. This is good insurance even for fertile land.

Soil is best loosened two or three inches deep to break up compaction although sandy soils may require nothing more than surface scratching. Heavier soils should be disked or rotary tilled when dry enough so that the soil crumbles. Rake up clumps of old vegetation that can interfere with seeding operations, or, even worse, take root and contaminate a stand of fine new cultivars.

Renovation without cultivation saves labor but the outcome is usually less assured than if the soil is tilled. Ideally, old vegetation should be knocked out chemically with glyphosate. Even if chemical knockdown is not feasible, mowing the old vegetation to stubble sets it back for awhile giving new seedlings an opportunity to grow.



Staff photo by Kelly James

Spring can also mean showers

Knowing Oregon and East County, you can expect a few drops of rain this spring and summer. And feminine, yet durable fashions, become even more popular. Model Linda

Smith is prepared with her umbrella and parachute jumpsuit by Pantasia. It is light green, has a front zipper and zip pockets. It came from W.R. Hicks Co. in Gresham.

Take care with the rhodies

Just like a person, rhododendron shrubs don't like to be up against a wall.

When rhododendrons are planted very close to house foundations or other concrete structures, the lime in the concrete can be leached out by rainfall and get into the soil around the rhododendron's roots.

This can be a problem because lime has a neutralizing effect on acid soil, and rhododendrons require acid soils for healthy growth.

"The appearance of new growth that has turned white is a good indication that the soil around the rhododendron roots has been neutralized," says Ray McNeilan of Gresham, an Oregon State University Extension home gardening agent.

To correct this problem apply ammonium sulfate at ¼ cup per well-established plant and no more than ½ pound per 100 square feet of planted area. If the rhododendrons are mulched, pull back the mulch and apply the ammonium sulfate directly to the soil surface.

Elemental sulfur is also effective in restoring soil acidity but works much slower than ammonium sulfate.

To avoid this problem in the future, plant rhododendrons at least three feet away from foundations or other concrete structures. If you have a severe problem of this nature with a well-established plant, one other alternative is to transplant the shrub away from the source of lime.

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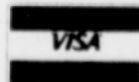
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