

Colonial bentgrass common

Spring ideal time to put down lawns

Berry plants require fertilizer

If putting in a new lawn is on your spring agenda of landscaping chores, do it now.

The warming weather of late April and early May is the ideal time to establish lawn grass. A new lawn, planted in April, can establish roots and top growth before hot summer weather comes.

Colonial bentgrass, fine fescue, improved perennial ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass are the four basic turfgrasses used in Oregon. Choosing the correct mixture of these grasses is important. Each type of grass has several individual varieties.

The mainstay of home lawns west of the Cascades is colonial bentgrass. It doesn't grow well east of the Cascades or south of the Willamette Valley.

Fine-leaf fescues are usually planted in mixtures with either colonial bentgrass or Kentucky bluegrass. Fine fescues are

well-suited to eastern areas of Oregon because they tolerate drought conditions. Fine fescues also perform well west of the Cascades except in areas that receive large amounts of precipitation.

Turf adapted perennial ryegrasses germinate and become established quickly. This type of ryegrass is often mixed with Kentucky bluegrass and fine fescue.

Before buying perennial ryegrass, be aware of the difference of types. The common forage varieties of perennial ryegrasses do not make good lawns. Lawn-type ryegrasses are often advertised as improved or turf-type ryes to distinguish them from the forage type ryes.

Growing conditions east of the Cascades and south of the Willamette Valley are best suited to growing Kentucky bluegrass. Two or more varieties of bluegrass should be blended and included in a mixture with fine

fescue, improved perennial ryegrass or both, for best results in establishing new bluegrass lawns.

If grass seed is purchased in a pre-packaged mixture, look over it carefully. One problem with such mixtures is that they don't always contain varieties or proportions of varieties best suited for a given area.

Lawn sites that are gravelly or consist of heavy clay should be covered with at least six inches of topsoil. Before adding the topsoil, level the sub-grade to make it conform to the slope or contour desired.

Topsoil isn't always needed. Simply rototill, grade and level the native soil if no topsoil is added.

Work a complete nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium fertilizer, such as 16-16-16, into the soil surface when spreading, leveling and firming the topsoil. Apply the fertilizer at the rate of 10 to 15 pounds per thousand square feet.

Scatter the seed uniformly over the prepared area after it has been raked so that the soil surface is rough. Light mulches can be used to cover the seed. If the soil surface is kept damp until the seed ger-

minates, mulches aren't necessary.

To stimulate the emerging grass, spread a half pound of ammonium sulfate for each hundred square feet of planted area. Trim the lawn when it grows high enough to be mowed.

The new lawn should be watered often until the grass comes up. Then water more deeply and infrequently. By mid-summer, water the lawn once a week with enough water to soak down six to eight inches. Fertilize the lawn every six to eight weeks with nitrogen during the growing season.

Most berries in the home garden need to be fertilized in the spring.

Fertilizing strawberries in the spring can cause too much vegetative growth and encourage soft, pulpy berries.

On the other hand, red and black raspberries and a number of trailing berries can use a shot of fertilizer in April. Fertilizer recommendations are as follows:

Red raspberries: 10-20-10 fertilizer (10 percent nitrogen, 20 percent phosphorus, 10 percent potassium), three cups every 100 square feet.

Black raspberries: 10-20-10 fertilizer, 2½ cups every 100 square feet.

Marionberries, loganberries and thornless evergreen blackberries: 10-20-10 fertilizer, four cups every 100 square feet.

Boysenberries: 10-20-10 fertilizer, two cups every 100 square feet.

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Raised beds answer to drainage problems

Raised beds may be the answer for home gardeners who have soils that don't drain well.

The primary purpose of raised beds is to provide better garden drainage and increased soil warmth for early plantings. Two other advantages of raised bed gardening are earlier maturing vegetables and greater yields from a small area.

A raised bed is simply a mound of soil 18 to 48 inches wide piled up to a depth of six to 12 inches. Raised beds can be made by simply piling up soil without any side support. Boards, railroad ties or rocks can be used on the sides and ends of the bed to hold in the soil.

A maximum bed width of 48 inches with access from both sides is recommended. The bed should be at least six and no more than 12 inches deep. Greater depth makes it difficult to hold the soil in the beds.

The soil itself can be whatever is available. Even heavier clay soils will drain if raised to a depth of six to eight inches above the surrounding surface.

Drainage and tilth of heavier soil can be improved by adding organic matter such as manure, grass clippings, leaves, straw, bark dust and sawdust. Coarser materials, particularly straw, bark dust and sawdust, require adding nitrogen fertilizer.

About 10 pounds of ammonium sulfate applied to each 1,000 square feet of bed area covered with one inch of coarse organic material will satisfy the nitrogen requirement.

Organic material can be composted before adding to the bed or can be mixed into the beds along with the fertilizer.

Double spading the beds to a depth of 10 to 12 inches

while adding organic material will provide additional depth and drainage for the bed.

Loam soils, like those sold commercially as topsoils, are excellent for raised beds because they drain and warm up quickly.

Gardeners purchasing soil for raised beds should be careful of the perennial weeds the soil may contain. Diligent digging of sprouting roots will prevent weeds from becoming established in the beds.

Maintaining a high level of fertility through the use of manure, composts and commercial fertilizers is important for good production in raised beds.

If soils which are high in sand are put on top of clay soil, rototilling two to three inches of sandy soil into the top inch of clay soil will help to blend the two.

Adequate irrigation is important in raised beds. Soils warm early and plant growth takes moisture from the soil rapidly. This is particularly true if the soil in the bed is sandy. Sandy soils have less moisture holding capacity and will require more frequent irrigation than heavier soils.

Beds should be flat on top to prevent irrigation water from running off rather than soaking in.

Raised beds are especially beneficial to early plantings of green peas, lettuce, green onions, spinach and radishes. Most vegetable crops in raised beds will mature earlier.

Friable bed soils will produce longer and smoother root crops such as carrots, parsnips, beets and onions. Succession plantings of crops such as carrots and beets following peas increases production in limited space.

Moisture culprit in 'damping off' disease

When young vegetable seedlings are growing strong and healthy, then suddenly keel over and die, the cause may be "damping off" disease.

The disease is caused by fungus organisms that frequently attack and kill young vegetable seedlings that have just emerged from the soil. Seedlings that die or fall over are said to damp off.

The destructiveness of the disease depends on the amount of fungus in the soil and on environmental conditions. An abundance of moisture in the soil, high humidity and cloudy days especially favor the development of damping off.

Gardeners growing vegetable transplants can almost eliminate damping off by sterilizing the planting soil before starting the transplants.

Mix one part good garden soil, one part peat moss and one part sand or perlite.

Place this mixture in a baking pan and place in a 180-degree oven for 30 minutes.

In the greenhouse or seedbed, damping off can be prevented by partially sterilizing the soil with heat or disinfectants. Check with your local county extension office for recommendations on disinfectants.

The first step to take in fighting damping off disease is to stop watering temporarily. Allow the soil to dry partially around the plants. If the seedlings are in flats or in coldframes, give them as much air and light as possible. Drier soil, more light and better drainage will lessen the danger that damping off will continue.

Watering with a chemical that will control damping off provides both water for the plants and chemicals for protection against the disease.

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