

Autumn Weather Ideal For Lawn Planting Nourish Lawns By Fertilizing



IN REBUILDING A LAWN in the fall, the seed bed in a small area may be prepared by spading the ground to the depth of a spading fork. For larger areas rotary tillers are recommended. The soil should be thoroughly worked.

Seed Bed Must Be Carefully Prepared

Where weeds have conquered the old lawn, or where a new lawn is to be made for the first time, it is certainly worthwhile to prepare the seedbed well. This is the last chance to get at the permanent habitat of half the grass plant—that part below the soil—that is, the root system.

In the autumn, soils are usually workable. It is helpful to choose a day shortly after a rain or sprinkling when the soil is dampish but not wet. Soils can then be more easily spaded or power tilled.

On heavier soils (clay and the loams) it is desirable to turn the soil to a depth of at least three or four inches. The surface can be left with chunks from pea to golf ball size, providing lodgment crevices for new seed. Such a surface also resists for a while the packing down into a "pavement" that prevents good seed sprouting.

In working the soil it is necessary to take it level. This may involve several alternate rakings and rollings and, on loose soils, perhaps a thorough sprinkling as well. Do not roll wet soil as this will re-compact it, undoing the efforts of the tillage. When it is no longer necessary to move soil about for leveling, it is a good time for applying a complete fertilizer at rates recommended by the manufacturer—usually 10 to 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet.

A level and loosened surface is ready to receive good seed. A quality blend for most of the area north of Tennessee is based primarily upon bluegrass. In most areas a seeding rate of two pounds per 1,000 square feet is adequate. To uniformly distribute rates as light as two pounds per 1,000, it is almost imperative to have a spreader. Hand sowing is possible but then it might be well to "extend" the seed for more bulk by mixing in an equal amount of dry soil, sand or cornmeal. Sow half the seed walking in one direction; the other half at right angles do this to avoid any missed spots.

If the surface is pebbled, as described previously, the seed will lodge in the crevices between the soil aggregates. If, by chance, it is dusty fine, a mat or a leaf rake turned upside-down and dragged over the area will imbed the seed. Should the soil be loose and fluffy, rolling is called for. Otherwise, the first watering will be sufficient to "plant" the seed.

MULCHING
Lawn makers are often confronted with the problem of protecting a new seeding, so that the seed and soil does not wash and so that the young grass comes up as quickly as possible. Mulching is a convenient and excellent practice to encourage both of these things. Actually, young seedling plants need no protection through the winter, since nature makes them very hardy and able to withstand the most adverse weather conditions. But it is essential to get them sprouted and grown to reasonable size in time to beat the heaving that comes through winter freezing and thawing of the soil.

Especially on slopes it is essential to mulch in order to prevent rilling of the soil and wash of the new seed. A great many materials could be used, the essential requirements being that air and light can penetrate so that the new sprouts do not smother, while at the same time drying out and soil wash is prevented.

Two of the most commonly used mulch materials are peat moss and clean straw. If peat moss is to be used don't get the pulverized horticultural peat, but rather the sphagnum type product. It will be dry when purchased, and should be thoroughly soaked before application to the lawn to prevent its loss by blowing. Sphagnum moss is especially absorbent of water. It is excellent in preventing the drying out of a soil but should

be no thicker than about one-fourth of an inch so that the sprouting seeds can work through it without smothering.

Straw is generally cheaper, and still reasonably available. It should be uniformly distributed over the surface to a depth of two or three straws thick, and simply left in place until it decays. The new grass will sprout and work through the straw so that the straw will not be an unattractive sight for very long.

Other mulch materials include small wood chips, oak tow, buckwheat hulls, tobacco stems, etc. Whatever is available, it must satisfy the requirements of comparative cheapness, ability to stay in place with a reasonable amount of sprinkling and wind blow, not packed too tight so as to smother the young seedlings, and be reasonably effective in preventing drying out or wash of the soil.

Mulches are a value in hastening the sprouting of a new bluegrass seedlings on the level as well as on slopes. It is a meritorious practice in any region, but is especially effective at mid-latitudes where hot dry autumns are apt to prevail.

LIKE NEW

Replacing the drawer pulls on an old bureau or other piece of furniture that you are refinishing with a modern lacquer or enamel finish may leave the original screw or bolt holes exposed. Fill these with plastic wood, a little more than full. Sand down when plastic wood has hardened. Either lacquer or enamel will blend the filled areas with the surrounding surface.

TOP HAT

Nail a two-by-four along the top of your red cedar fence to prevent the wood's weathering, thus adding longer life. This little touch will also impart a finished look to your fence or fence section, whether it be of louvered, combed stake, board and board or basketweave design.

Overseeding May Succeed

There should be sufficient permanent grass remaining in the old lawn that it is worthy of "revivification." Even a thin scattering of the hardy bluegrass is worth encouraging to fill in to a complete turf by appropriate fertilizing and overseeding. Of course, if a lawn is a completely lost cause, it will be smart to remake it entirely following the procedures suggested in the write-up on soil preparation.

In overseeding, quality lawn seed is scattered among the existing vegetation usually at about half the new seeding rate. In areas that are especially bare, or where it is dubious that much seed will lodge, it might be wise to use the full rate.

However, if grass won't grow there at all, more seed won't cure the trouble. Then the cause of grass demise must be sought—perhaps some such thing as lack of fertility, spilled chemicals, buried debris, etc.

Fertilizing the lawn is essential and will not interfere with the overseeding. In fact, the same spreader that can so effectively distribute fertilizer uniformly, can also distribute the light rates of seed used in overseeding.

STRENGTH
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AFTER THE SEED BED has been prepared and fertilized, Kentucky bluegrass is sown at the rate of one to two pounds per thousand square feet. A mechanical spreader will help you get a proper distribution of seed.

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