



# Planting A Lawn From Seed

Planting a lawn from seed, whether a new lawn or overseeding an existing lawn, is a simple process and when done properly can provide you with years of enjoyment. A seeded lawn offers a broader number of seed mixtures and varieties that can be tailored to your particular conditions such as soil type, climate, sun or shade location, degree of wear, etc.

## When To Plant

While the California climate allows for planting at any time of the year, the best times to start a lawn are fall and spring. Winter is also acceptable but establishment takes a little longer because of the cooler temperatures. Planting seed in high temperatures (90°) can create weed, disease and germination problems.

## Seed Bed Preparation

Remove all old vegetation and cultivate soil to a depth of 4 to 6 inches. It is recommended that a good organic soil amendment be added to the soil to insure the development of a good root system and dense growth. Other amendments should be added at this time to adjust soil pH. A soil test may be advisable. Consult your dealer for recommendations. After cultivation, rake lawn level and slope away from house or patio. Be sure to level areas which may cause "puddling" when watered.

## **Weeds**

The lot of lawn seed you will purchase has been tested by state and county agricultural officials and found to be free of any noxious (economically troublesome) weeds. Even though this seed has been thoroughly cleaned by modern seed cleaning equipment, a very small amount of weed and crop seed remains and is stated in the analysis of each product package. Most of these seeds come from open growing fields in the Pacific Northwest (where seed is produced) and are not the type that could cause weed problems in your lawn. Weeds that germinate in a new lawn are those seeds that have been dormant in the soil for many years.

They exist beneath the surface and are brought in by wind, birds and organic matter. When the soil is cultivated, these seeds are brought to the surface and when given light and moisture, germinate to compete with new grasses. Healthy lawns crowd out weeds while neglected ones encourage weed growth. With proper care most weed problems can be easily eliminated. Ask your dealer for recommendations on selective weed killers for your lawn.

If the area you are planting has a weed problem or if the current stand of grass is undesirable, it is best to use some sort of weed control prior to planting. Digging out the weeds will not solve the problem and cultivating the soil can bring weed seeds to the surface and cause problems. Therefore, in order to control weeds, prepare the soil as if you were going to plant grass seed. Hold off on planting the grass seed and water the area thoroughly for two to three weeks in order to get the weeds to germinate. After the weeds have sprouted, spray the area with the herbicide glyphosate (sold as Ortho Clean-Up® or Monsanto RoundUp®) according to the instructions on the container. Wait one week after spraying, then plant the lawn seed without further disturbing the soil surface. This simple technique is effective in controlling most weed problems.

## **Fertilizing**

Your new lawn will get off to a much better start if you put down a pre-plant fertilizer when you sow the seed. There is a dramatic difference in lawns that are started with fertilizer. You should use a product low in nitrogen. Ask your dealer for recommendations.

## **Seeding**

Be sure that you have measured your area correctly and sow the seed according to the coverage listed on the container. It is recommended that a broadcast spreader be used to insure uniform coverage. Spreading the seed by hand is not recommended but if you must, mix the seed with some kind of organic matter in order to insure even coverage. Keep in mind that it is much better to go over an area two to three times when seeding than to start out using too much and only partially cover the area.

Rake the seed lightly then cover with 1/8 to 1/4 inch of a quality top dressing that is free of weeds. Use a "bird cage" type spreader (usually loaned by your dealer) and go over the area twice.

## **Watering**

This is the most critical step in starting a new lawn. It is very important that the surface be kept damp **AT ALL TIMES** during the germination period of two to four weeks. Should the surface be allowed dry out for only a short time, the tiny grass plants will die. Naturally, the surface will need to be watered several times a day on windy and/or warm days, while in cooler temperatures a couple times a day may be sufficient. Do not allow water to puddle or run off.

## **Mowing**

When the grass reaches about three inches begin mowing. Set the cutting edge at no less than two inches. Continue mowing at this height until the grass has filled in. Never mow more than 1/3 of the grass blade at one time as injury to the grass may result.

## **Renovating An Old Or Thin Lawn**

All lawns at some time need to be renovated to maintain their beauty. If your lawn is basically healthy with thin and bare spots, renovation can make it look like new. To renovate an Existing lawn:

1. Mow lawn as short as possible, not more than 1/2 inch high.
2. Remove thatch and debris. Should you have a heavy layer of thatch built up, you will need to rent a vertical mower or renovator to remove it. It is very important that the seed come in contact with the soil.
3. Aerify the soil if hard-packed.
4. Sow seed and pre-plant fertilizer according

to the directions on the package.

5. Cover the seed with mulch.

Note: Should a weed problem exist, spray first with glyphosate, wait one week, then follow the steps above.

## Maintenance For Established Lawns

**Watering** Most lawn problems are a result of poor watering methods. Generally speaking, most lawns need heavy watering one to two times per week. Clay soils require less watering while sandy soils need more frequent watering. Always water early in the day.

**Fertilizing** After the first two to three mowings a complete lawn food may be applied. Avoid "weed and feed" fertilizers until the lawn is three months old. Fertilize regularly every six to eight weeks during the fall, winter and spring. Avoid fertilizing during hot weather except Bermudagrass and Dichondra.

**Mowing** Recommended mowing height for most lawns is 1-1/2 to 2 inches high. However it is recommended that during the warm months (May to October) the grass be mowed to 2-1/2 to 3 inches. This reduces heat stress, water consumption and disease problems. Bermudagrass may be mowed at low cutting heights.

### Turfgrass Betters Your Environment!

Grass Areas:  
Reduce noise levels  
Reduce temperatures  
Produce oxygen  
Trap dust  
Absorb objectionable oxides

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