



PLANTING A NEW LAWN FROM SEED

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Timing and Planning are the Keys to Success

What grass seed is best? How do you prepare the soil? When and how much do you water? What do you do after the grass comes up? Let's consider these questions on our way to building a new grass lawn.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SEED. An informed decision should be based on personal preference, seed performance and cost, and the planting location. All seed should have an 85% or higher germination rate. Varieties developed for desert climates (heat and drought tolerance) generally use less water and are preferable to common eastern varieties.

Tall fescue is rated *Very Good*. Sow in full to part sun at the rate of 1 pound per 100 square feet. Best planting times are March through May and September through October. Allow 7-10 days for germination, a little longer in cooler temperatures.

Dwarf fescue (sometimes labeled as Dwarf Tall Fescue) is rated *Very Good*. Sow in full to part sun at the rate of 1 pound per 100 square feet. Best planted March through May and September through October. Allow 10-14 days for germination. Dwarf varieties like *Emerald Carpet™* grow more slowly, are finer-bladed, need less mowing and use less water. Varieties like *RTF™ Water Saver™*, have roots that spread by rhizome allowing the plant to spread laterally, and self-repair. For shady areas, ask about varieties like *Creeping Red Fescue* that are specially developed to grow in shade. These varieties are frequently available in packages labeled as *Shady Seed* or *Dense Shade*.

Bermuda is rated *Excellent*. This is the best choice for a low maintenance desert lawn. It grows more slowly, uses less water and fertilizer, is mowed shorter giving the "golf course" look. Improved, coated turf-type varieties are your best bet. Sow in full sun at the rate of 1 pound per 500 square feet. Plant May through September. Allow 7-14 days for germination. Bermuda goes completely dormant (brown) in winter and starts to green up again in late April or early May. Over seed with annual or perennial ryegrass in October to keep your lawn green. The better hybrid bermuda varieties like *Tifgreen* produce no viable seed and are available in stolons and sod only.

Bluegrass varieties are rated *Good*. Sow in full to part sun at the rate of 3-4 pounds per 1000 square feet. Best planted March through May and September through October. Allow 14-21 days for germination. Gives a nice look when mixed with tall fescue. Avoid planting as a year round lawn in hot, wind-swept exposures.

Perennial Ryegrass is rated *Good*. Sow in full to part sun at the rate of 1 pound per 100 square feet. Best planted in fall as an over seed to established bermuda lawns (Annual or Winter Ryegrass is also used). This seed is also good for areas where a quick, temporary green-up is desired. Avoid planting as a year round lawn in hot exposures. This grass usually dies out with the heat of summer.

SOIL PREPARATION AND SEEDING.

Approach this part of your lawn project in phases. An orderly approach will save time, money and aggravation.

Provide adequate good quality soil beneath your new lawn. A depth of 3 to 4" minimum is required to provide a healthy lawn for more than two years. You can purchase bulk new topsoil (compost and soil mix) from any of the Star Nurseries and delivered to your home. Add enough topsoil to reach proper grade, ask our specialists to help calculate the correct volume of soil. For existing soils; and if you don't test your soil, assume that salt levels are high and all nutrient levels are low. Apply organic amendments like *Paydirt™*, *Top Dressing* or *Humus Gro* at the rate of 2 cubic feet per 24-30 square feet. Rototill as deeply as possible removing large rocks, obstructions and debris as you go.

Clean and kill existing vegetation in the lawn area. Use a herbicide like *Round-up®* or *Com-pleet®* that does not leave a toxic residue. These products work best on actively growing weeds and grasses. Water well, wait a day or so, then apply the herbicide according to label instructions. Don't use on windy days as drift could cause damage to desirable trees and shrubs. Small amounts of dead weeds and turf can be uprooted and raked from the lawn area.

Install a quality sprinkler system to insure successful lawn establishment. Unless the area is extremely small, watering by hand is difficult, if not impossible, especially during the summer months. A Star Nursery irrigation specialist will help you plan the system best suited to your needs.

Rake and level the area for final grading and removal of stones. Broadcast a starter fertilizer like *Dr. Q's® Sod & Seed Starter* at the rate prescribed on the package and rake lightly into the top layer of prepared soil. Except for planned mound areas, your lawn should be level to prevent mower scalping and water collecting low areas. Loose soil should be firmed with a water roller.

Water the soil thoroughly 3-4 times in 24 hours before seeding. Several short waterings, 3-4 hours apart may be necessary to avoid runoff and standing water.

Sow the seed at rates previously mentioned. Use an adjustable broadcast, drop or hand spreader. Sow half the seed over the entire lawn area in one direction. Spread the remaining seed at right angles to your first application. Think down then across, or a tic-tac-toe pattern.

Water your new lawn often. Seed must be kept moist to insure proper germination. A thin layer (about ¼ inch) of organic top dressing helps to keep seed moist and hides it from the birds. *Steer Manure* makes a good, inexpensive seed cover and is applied at the rate of 2 cubic feet per 125 square feet with a manure spreader. Using a water roller on the seed cover, while it is dry, insures better seed and soil contact. After rolling, water thoroughly.

Insufficient watering during the germination period probably causes more newly seeded lawns to fail than anything else. The top layer of soil must stay constantly moist. The frequency and length of watering depends on weather conditions. Pay particular attention to your new lawn during windy periods. Extra measures may be needed to insure total coverage during these times.

Generally, water each time for 3-5 minutes between the hours of 3 am and 6 pm.

For temperatures:	Over 110°;	6 – 8 times daily	100 - 110°;	4 – 6 times daily
	80 - 100°;	3 – 4 times daily	60 - 80°;	2 – 3 times daily

Lawn watering after the first mowing should always be long enough to penetrate at least 6 inches of soil. About 10 minutes should be enough (2 x 5 minutes, 1 hour apart for sloped areas). Do not use broadleaf weed killers for at least 2 mowings.

What's Next? Feed your new lawn every 4-6 weeks during the growing season with the correct seasonal fertilizer. Heavy clay soils are fertilized less often; slow-release fertilizers need even fewer applications. If you're not sure about your selection, see a Star Nursery associate for the right advice.