



SEED & SUPPLIES FOR NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

## PLANTING A LAWN FROM SEED

Planting a lawn from seed rather than sod offers a broader number of seed mixtures and varieties that can be tailored to your preferences and particular conditions such as soil type, climate, sun or shade location, and degree of anticipated wear. Whether seeding a new lawn or over-seeding an existing lawn, it is a simple process which, when done properly, can provide years of enjoyment.

**WHEN TO PLANT** Northern California's low- to mid-elevation climates allow for seeding a lawn at any time of the year yet the best times are fall and spring. In winter, establishment takes longer because of the colder temperatures which can encourage the growth of cool-season weeds. Planting seed in temperatures of 90° and above can create disease and germination problems and can encourage the growth of warm-season weeds.

**SEED BED PREPARATION** Remove existing vegetation and cultivate the soil to a depth of 4-6 inches. A good organic soil amendment should be added to ensure the development of the lawn's dense growth and its root system. Any other amendments should be added at this time to adjust soil pH. A soil test may be advisable; consult your nursery or garden center for recommendations. After cultivation, rake lawn area level and be sure the final grade of the soil slopes slightly away from the foundation of a house or the edges of any patio or walkways. Level any areas which "puddle" after trial watering.

**WEEDS** New weed seeds may be brought in by wind, birds and organic matter. Other weed seeds may have been dormant beneath the surface of the soil for many years. When the soil is cultivated, these seeds are brought to the surface; given light, moisture, and fertilizer, these seeds germinate and the plants compete with the new lawn seedlings. If the area you are planting has a weed problem, some sort of weed control prior to planting is advisable. Digging out visible weeds may help solve the problem but, as discussed, cultivating the soil can bring other weed seeds to the surface. Therefore, in order to control weeds, prepare the soil as if you were going to plant the lawn but hold off on planting the desirable grass seed; water the area thoroughly for two to three weeks in order to get any weed seeds to germinate. After the weeds have sprouted, manually remove or treat the area with an appropriate post-emergent herbicide (consult your nursery or garden center) and wait the correct length of time without further disturbing the soil surface before planting the lawn seed.

**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 between lawns started with or without fertilizer. You should use a starter-fertilizer or a product relatively low in nitrogen. Ask your nursery or garden center for recommendations.



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**SEEDING** Be sure that you have measured your area correctly and sow the seed according to the coverage listed on the container. Keep in mind that it is much better to go over an area 2 to 3 times when seeding than to start out using too much seed and end up covering the area non-uniformly. It is recommended that a fertilizer or broadcast spreader be used in order to ensure uniform coverage. Spreading the seed by hand is not recommended but if you do, mix the seed with some kind of organic matter in order to ensure even coverage thorough uniform distribution. Rake seed in lightly then cover with 1/8" to 1/4" of a quality top dressing which is guaranteed to be free of weeds. Use a roller of some sort (available at nursery or garden center or rental yard) to go over the area at least twice in order to ensure that the seed makes good contact with the soil.

**WATERING** It is critical that the surface be kept damp **AT ALL TIMES** during the germination period lasting two to four weeks. Should the surface be allowed to dry out for only a short time, the tiny grass seedlings can die. Naturally, the surface will need to be watered several times a day on windier and/or warmer days, while in cooler temperatures a couple of times a day may be sufficient. Do not allow water to puddle or run off. Whenever possible, allow your own close observations to override any preset irrigation schedules.

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

## **RENOVATING AN OLD OR THIN LAWN**

All lawns need to be renovated sometime to maintain their vitality and best appearance. If your lawn is basically healthy but displays thin and bare spots, renovating can make it look brand new. To renovate an existing lawn:

1. Mow lawn as short as possible and leave it no higher than 1/2".
2. Remove thatch and debris. If a heavy layer of thatch has built up, you will need to rent a vertical mower or renovator to help remove it.
3. Aerify the soil if hard-packed.
4. Sow the seed and pre-plant fertilizer according to directions on the package.
5. Cover the seed with top dressing.

Note: Should spot weeds pose a problem in the existing lawn, spray first with glyphosate according to manufacturer's instructions, wait one week then follow the steps above.



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## MAINTENANCE FOR ESTABLISHED LAWNS

**FERTILIZING** After the first two to three mowings, a complete lawn food may be applied. Avoid “weed & feed” herbicide & fertilizer combination products until the lawn is three months old or has been mowed three times. Fertilize regularly (every 6-8 weeks) during the fall, winter and spring. Avoid fertilizing during hot weather except with Bermudagrass and dichondra.

**MOWING** Recommended mowing heights vary with type of grass and time of year:

<i>Cool Season Turf</i>	<i>Ideal Mowing Heights</i>
Perennial Rye (winter active varieties available)	1.5 – 2.5 inches
Tall Fescue	3.0 inches
Kentucky Bluegrass	1.5 – 2.5 inches
Fine Fescues	2.5 inches
<i>Warm Season Turf</i>	
Bermudagrass	2.0 inches

It is highly recommended that during the warmer months (late-May to mid-October) the grass be mowed at the higher end of the suggested range. This reduces heat stress, water consumption and disease problems. Bermudagrass may be mowed at lower cutting heights.

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