

Starting a New Lawn in Western Oregon

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You do not need to be an expert to grow a good lawn, but you do have to adhere to sound establishment and maintenance practices. In planting a lawn, it is important to make use of the best possible materials and the best available information.

Following are some tips on preparing and seeding a lawn that will be helpful to anyone in this area. This information is designed for western Oregon and particularly for Multnomah County.

1. The slope of the seedbed should allow for proper surface drainage. All low areas should be filled up and allowed to settle before seeding is done. A grade of not less than 2% or more than 10% should be used for best results.

2. The soil itself should be examined carefully. If there is excess clay, the soil should be amended to provide a more favorable seedbed. Materials that can be added include organic matter such as peat moss, well rotted manure, compost, or leaf mold. These should be thoroughly worked into the top 6 to 10 inches of the soil. When adding topsoil, make sure it is of good quality and free of weed seeds. This also pertains to manure, if it is used, since perennial pest weeds such as quackgrass, tall fescue, and orchardgrass are very objectionable in lawns.

3. Limestone and fertilizer should be added at this time. Most soils in our area are acid by nature and should be limed for best turf growth. An application of 50 to 100 pounds of limestone per 1,000 square feet is recommended. It is important to avoid putting limestone where acid-loving plants are to be grown. A complete lawn fertilizer is also suggested at this time. If an organic amendment is added to the soil, more fertilizer should be used to break down this material. About half of

the fertilizer should be applied in one direction over the area, with the remainder at a right angle. This will provide good distribution of the fertilizer. Use about 50 pounds of 12-4-8 per 1,000 square feet and work it into the soil.

4. A drain tile should be installed in areas that cannot be drained by surface drainage. It should be remembered that certain types of soil cannot be drained by tile. In this case, surface drainage should be used. A sprinkler irrigation system should be installed before seeding. Underground irrigation systems are common and probably pay for themselves over a period of time.

5. The surface should be level, but not extremely fine, to provide the best seedbed. The soil should be even with sidewalks, drives, curbs, and patios at the time of seeding. Firming the soil with a roller, rake, or drag allows for good germination.

6. After the seedbed is level and firm, moisture should be added to germinate weed seeds while the soil is settling. These seedlings can then be killed by working the soil. This will eliminate many weeds that would otherwise be a problem in the new lawn. A period of three to four weeks should elapse for this purpose. Weed killers should not be used at this time, because they will prevent the germination of grass seed. This is the reason mechanical means of weed control are used at this time.

7. Fertilize the seedbed with a starter fertilizer, worked into the top 2 inches of soil. About 8 to 10 pounds of 12-4-8 can be used per 1,000 square feet.

8. The lawn can be seeded at this time, using a good seeder. The seed can be mixed with the top



This is one of a series of *Fact Sheets* reporting Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Gene M. Lear, director. Printed and distributed in furtherance of Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Oregon State University, Oregon counties, and U. S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

one-quarter to one-half inch of soil, but care should be taken not to bury the seed too deeply. This would cause slow and irregular germination. Only the best quality seed should be used in the lawn. Actually, the seed is the cheapest investment in the total cost of lawn establishment.

9. The types of grasses recommended for this area include the fine fescues and the bentgrasses. Kentucky bluegrass is often added to complete the mixture. The fescues tend to survive under shady conditions, whereas the bents tend to survive under sunny conditions. After seeding, cover the seed lightly and irrigate thoroughly. A mulch

of peat moss or lawn clippings can be used to conserve moisture. It is important to keep the seed moist during the two to three weeks it takes for germination.

10. After the lawn is established, it can be mowed when it reaches a height of about one inch. No attempts should be made to control pests with chemicals for about six months to one year after seeding.

Lawns, like automobiles, should receive proper maintenance which, over the years, prevents costly repairs.