

## Sowing Grass Seed

### Grow your own Lawn from Seed

The most important considerations in establishing a new lawn are: drainage, soil quality, seedbed preparation, and choice of seed, fertility and moisture.

If you choose to plant your new lawn in the spring, begin just as soon as the soil is dry enough to work, preferably mid-April to mid-May. This will give your new grass time to get well established before the hot, dry weather sets in.

Fall is often a better time to start your lawn, from mid-August to the end of September. Your seedbed is less likely to dry out at this time of year, and the grass should be well established before winter.

The area to be seeded should be as level as possible, with a gentle slope away from buildings. If possible, avoid steep slopes or terraces where water may erode or wash away topsoil. The entire surface should have a layer of good topsoil about 12 to 15 cm deep. It may be advisable to mix peat moss or composted manure into your topsoil for best results.



Spread commercial fertilizer over area according to label directions.

Sow seed, by hand or spreader: if by hand, choose a calm day.

Keep mulch or seedbed dark with moisture until grass is growing out of the soil.

### The Seedbed

Rake the surface thoroughly to prepare the seedbed and avoid any depressions that may hold surface water. Apply a good quality fertilizer, preferably with an analysis on a 1-2-1 ratio, the middle number representing the proportion of phosphorous. This will assist in developing a healthy root system. Rake the surface again before seeding.

### Choosing and Planting the Seed

It pays to select good quality seed. It is also wise to choose a mixture of at least two or three varieties in accordance with your requirements. This will depend on sun and shade conditions. Don't skimp when seeding. It is best to use a mechanical spreader, although small areas may be hand seeded. Distribute the seed as evenly as possible,

applying half the seed travelling back and forth, crossing your first pattern at 90° with the balance of the seed.

Rake lightly, then roll lightly to ensure that the seed is in firm contact with the soil. Water slowly and evenly until 2.5 cm of topsoil is thoroughly moist and keep soil moist until grass seedlings are well established. Avoid creating puddles.

### Tending the New Lawn

When new grass has grown to a height of 6 to 8 cm, it may be cut, but not shorter than 4 to 5 cm. Do not let the grass grow so long that it will not stand upright. Ensure that your mower blade is sharp to avoid unnecessary bruising of the grass plants. While there must be reasonable growth of leaves to develop a healthy root system, mow the lawn regularly so cuttings will be only 12 to 15 mm long. This avoids having to remove cuttings.

### Feeding a New Lawn

If you start your lawn in the spring, it will require feeding again in late June and again in the fall. For this first feeding, use half the rate recommended on the fertilizer package. Use the full recommendation for the fall feeding.

### What about Weeds?

If you have been careful to put down good topsoil, weeds during early growth should not be a big problem. Some careful hand weeding is best for the first few weeds that appear during the first four to six weeks.

After a new lawn has been cut at least twice, you may apply a chemical weed control if necessary, but be sure to follow the directions on the package very carefully.

### Overseeding can improve your lawn

Your lawn will continue to improve with age, if you follow these simple rules:

1. Keep your lawn free of weeds, either by hand weeding or with a chemical weed control.
2. Fertilize your lawn at least three times a year, following directions on the package.
3. Each spring or fall, after cutting the grass very short, rake thoroughly and, if necessary, add a little top dressing.
4. If the soil appears hard and compacted, try going over it with an aerating roller, then top dress and reseed as above.
5. Try and keep your lawn cut to about 5 cm in height, and avoid leaving cuttings longer than 12 to 15 mm on the lawn after mowing.



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