



Starting & Overseeding Lawns

Starting a new lawn

Investigate the site. Make sure the ground gently slopes (1% to 15%) away from the house to prevent water from entering the basement.

Modify the soil. If the native soil is extremely rocky, droughty, compacted or poorly drained, you will need to make modifications, such as installing underground drainlines or irrigation lines, in order for turfgrasses to grow vigorously. In poor soils, adding 4 to 6 inches of loam also will be beneficial.

Test soil. An inexpensive soil test helps measure the soil's pH and fertilizer needs. For a test kit, visit your local UNH Cooperative Extension County Office or call Extension's toll free Info Line at 1-877-398-4769 Monday through Friday, 9AM - 2 PM.

Apply lime (if necessary). Lime is immobile in the soil and should be rototilled into the upper 4 to 6 inches of soil before seeding.

Rototill, or otherwise loosen soil and incorporate lime into the upper 6 inches.

Rake and remove any large stones, sticks or other debris visible on the soil surface.

Firm soil surface. Rolling or watering helps settle the loosened soil.

Apply fertilizer. Rake a starter-type fertilizer into the upper inch of soil to deliver 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet

Seed. Select a seed mixture containing improved varieties well suited to your lawn. Broadcast seed uniformly over the area using a drop or rotary spreader. Achieve uniformity by seeding in opposite directions after setting the spreader to deliver at ½ the desired rate.

Rake. Using very light pressure, rake the seed into the upper ¼ inch of soil. While some seeds will remain visible on the surface (birds do not eat enough seed to ruin a seeding), raking is more effective than burying the seed too deeply.

Roll (optional). Rolling helps pinch the seeds and soil particles together to prevent drying out.

Control crabgrass. (spring seedings). Unless prevented, crabgrass often predominates a spring lawn seeding. Garden centers sell herbicides that stop crabgrass seeds from germinating. Read the herbicide label carefully before purchasing a herbicide since some products can only be used on mature turf (not new seedings).

Mulch (optional). Apply weed-free straw uniformly over the new seeding to conserve moisture and reduce erosion on sloping ground. Apply approximately 1 bale per 1000 square feet.

Water. Keep the soil surface moist to prevent the seeds from drying out. This often requires light (5 to 10 minutes), frequent (twice daily) watering for 2 to 3 weeks after seeding.

Overseeding a lawn

Renovation, or overseeding, involves revitalizing an old lawn without removing all the sod. Many old, thin, weed-infested home lawns are completely restored using this approach. Renovation is most successful when more than half the existing lawn is still producing desirable turfgrass species. Here are the steps to take when overseeding:

Remove thatch. If thatch (dead, dry vegetation) has built up more than an inch, power-rake the area to be overseeded. Thoroughness is important; seeding into thatch results in poor germination.

Remove clippings. Using a mower with grass-catcher attachment, collect and remove the discarded thatch. For small areas a bamboo rake works well.

Reseed. Uniformly scatter seeds over the soil surface using a drop or rotary spreader. Hand-sprinkling seeds also works well on small, irregular patches that need overseeding.

Rake. Lightly drag or rake the seed into the upper ¼ inch of soil.

Roll. Roll the area to ensure firm contact between seed and soil.

Mulch (optional). Sprinkle weed-free straw lightly over the seeded area.

Water. As with new lawns, keep the overseeded area moist at all times during the germination and early seeding stages.

Mow. Continue mowing the lawn at approximately 2-2½ inches.

Enjoy your beautiful lawn!

Stop! Read the label on every pesticide container each time before using the material. Pesticides must be applied only as directed on the label to be in compliance with the law. All pesticides listed in this publication are contingent upon continued registration. Contact the Division of Pesticide Control at (603) 271-3550 to check registration status. Dispose of empty containers safely, according to NH regulations.

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