



GARDEN NOTES

NEXT YEAR'S LAWN STARTS TODAY

By Dennis Hinkamp

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Though you may be looking forward to the end of this year's mowing, it's still not too late to renovate your lawn or plant a new one before the snow flies.

Fall is a great time to establish and reseed lawns, says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. The weather is mild and ideal for our cool season grasses. Seed before the first week of October if possible, although mid-October is not too late for most areas.

Before planting the seed or sod make sure the soil is worked as deeply as possible, Goodspeed says. This allows the roots to penetrate deeper and makes the lawn healthier.

"Use a power tiller to work in at least 3 to 4 inches of organic matter and a starter fertilizer into the soil this is the only time you can amend the soil in the lawn," he adds.

After the area has been worked, he says to rake it to a final grade making sure it drains away from the house and has no deep swells or major drainage problems. If you are going to add a sprinkler system now is the time. After the soil has been replaced in the sprinkler pipe trenches, run the sprinkler system, for a while, watching the drainage to make sure it is going where it should. This also helps the soil settle in the trenches.

Rake and grade the area one more time to prepare the soil for seed or sod.

"Purchase quality grass seed because you normally get what you pay for," Goodspeed says. "I prefer a straight blue grass blend containing four to five different varieties of blue grass. If the area is shady, add some fescue or perennial rye to the mix. Blue grass takes longer to germinate, but over the years its quality will be greatly treasured."

He recommends applying the seed at a rate of 4 to 6 pounds per 1,000 sq. ft. and, to insure uniform coverage, apply the seed in two directions. Then rake the area lightly after planting to get the seed into the soil. Cover the area lightly with organic matter such as straw, peat moss, grass clippings or shredded leaves to help conserve moisture.

Next, Goodspeed says to pack the area with a heavy roller. This keeps the seed in the soil and helps with watering and maintaining the final grade.

The area is now ready to be watered.

“Start by sprinkling a new lawn two to three times a day for a few minutes because the seeds and new seedlings have shallow roots,” Goodspeed says. “As the grass begins to emerge and grow, lengthen the time of watering and reduce the frequency. Apply a fertilizer in late October or early November to keep it healthy through the winter and into spring.”

He says don't worry about weeds. Annual weeds die off during the winter, and the lawn will out compete most weeds as it thickens. A broadleaf herbicide can be applied in May to help kill any returning weeds. By then, the lawn will be established enough that the herbicide will not damage the new growth, and it will be ready to mow and use

For more information, contact your local [USU County Extension office](#).

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