

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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“Seeding Lawns in September”

The key to a successful lawn in June, July and August, often lies in what happened in September the year before. Tall fescue lawns that have become thin over the summer can be thickened up by overseeding in September. However, boosting your lawn is a bit more involved than simply spreading lawn seed across your yard. Keys to a successful lawn seeding are proper seeding rates, an even dispersal, and good seed-to-soil contact with proper watering.

For tall fescue laws, K-State horticulturalist suggest using 6 to 8 lbs. of seed per 1,000 square feet for newly-planted areas, and about half that amount for overseeding areas in the shade. For the other common varieties found in Kansas, Kentucky bluegrass, use 2 to 3 lbs. of seed per 1,000 square feet. Use half that amount in the shady areas. Using too much seed makes the lawn more prone to disease and damage from stress. Using too little seed may result in clumpy turf that is not as visually pleasing.

Spreading the seed evenly is also very important to the process. This is best achieved by carefully calibrating the seeder, or by adjusting the seeder to a low setting and making several passes to ensure even distribution. Make sure to avoid missing areas, multiple passes with the seeder in opposite directions usually helps avoid this problem.

Good seed-to-soil contact is very important for good germination rates. Before seeding, mow the grass short (1” to 1.5”) and remove the clippings to increase the amount of light that will reach the young seedlings.

Proper watering is the final step in the overseeding process. Water newly-planted areas lightly, but often, keeping soil moist but not waterlogged. On hot days, a new lawn may need to be watered up to three times a day, if watered less the germination process will be slower. If days are cool and winds are low the lawn may only need watered every two days. As the grass plants come up, you can gradually back off on watering. Eventually to just once a week if there is no rain. There is a good test to see if your lawn requires water. If you can push the blades down and they do not spring back up quickly, your lawn needs water.

Once the seeds sprout, minimize foot traffic until the seedlings are more robust and ready to be mowed. This should happen when they are about 3 to 4 inches tall.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Lindsay Shorter, at lindsayshorter@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.