DORMANT SEEDING

Dormant seeding is lawn seeding when the soil temperature is below 50oF, which is low enough to inhibit seed germination. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas is an excellent time in our area.

Although, the advantages of dormant seeding outweighs disadvantages oddities of nature can determine success or failure. For example, an unusually mild winter-which could result in premature germination-reduces the chances of obtaining a good stand of turf grass with dormant seeding. Successful turf establishment requires that you select the appropriate turf grass species, apply the seed at the proper rate and with a suitable method, and use optimal timing.

Dormant seeding offers a number of advantages over seeding in September or March. By dormant seeding, you avoid some of the problems you encounter when seeding in spring. Spring tends to be wet. This is good for seed germination, but you may not be able to prepare the soil and plant because of these wet conditions. Also, by the time the soil is dry enough for you to prepare it and plant, you'll have to contend with a flush of weed-seed germination.

- Less watering required then seeding in September because of lower ambient temperatures.
- No fertilization is needed at the time of seeding as plants will not germinate until March.
- Winter seeded lawns will germinate earlier and progress faster then those seeded in the spring.
- Allows for earlier and more effective treatment of broad leaf weeds and crabgrass in May.

How do you dormant seed?

*Timing. To ensure that seeds do not germinate immediately, it is vital to wait until temperatures are low. Thus, proceeding only after the ground is frozen offers the greatest chance of success with dormant seeding.

Dormant seed no later than early spring, before frosty weather has passed. Seed benefits from frost heaving and cracking, which allows the seed to settle into the surface for closer contact with the soil and increases chances for successful establishment. Once spring arrives, keep the area moist, as you would with any turf establishment.

* Seed selection should be carefully considered. Fast germination grasses such as rye [annual or perennial] and winter wheat are still desirable species to use, but consider using a mix that includes slower germination species, such as fescues and blues. This mix is critical in the event that the Fall remains warm longer than normal or Winter produces a warm-up that causes ‘fast’ variety germination. A proper mix will result in the bulk of the seed remaining dormant until Spring.

*Soil erosion is another consideration when dormant seeding. Sloped areas are of particular concern. Be sure to mulch seeded slopes to reduce the potential for seed washout by surface water. Some experts suggest avoiding dormant seeding altogether where slopes are greater than 3 percent.

*Finally, avoid dark-colored mulches, which can increase the chance of germination of your dormant seeding by raising surface temperatures.

* Perform standard seedbed preparations before the ground freezes. Dormant seeding is performed virtually the same as seeding in September or March.

CLEAR THE LAWN OF DEBRIS

If the lawn has a thick layer of thatch or has dead matted grass from insect or fungal damage, power raking is recommended. Next rake or mow and bag clippings. If the lawn does not need power raking, just mow short and bag the clippings.

VERTICUT

Our professional verticutter will prepare the soil by creating shallow furrows in the soil for the seed to settle.

SEED

Apply seed with either our drop or broadcast spreaders. Seeding rates are the same as those for early fall seeding. If erosion is a potential problem, you may consider increasing the rate of seed to compensate for expected losses. However, preventing erosion with adequate mulching is preferable.

One successful strategy is applying seed on a frosty morning. When the sun emerges, the moisture from the melting frost "grabs" onto the seed, causing it to sink nicely into the soil for good seed-to-soil contact.

Another method involves seeding prior to a predicted snow. This reduces the chances of soil thawing and seed washing and blowing. Snow provides the best protection of dormant seedings. It also is possible to seed over a snow cover if the ground is firm enough to support seeding equipment and the snow depth is 2 inches or less. When the snow melts, the seed drops to the soil surface. The melting snow then provides moisture needed for seed germination. You can speed snowmelt by mixing dark-colored fertilizer with the seed. The seed then drops more rapidly through the snow to reach the soil surface.

DO NOT FERTILIZE

As the plants are dormant and the seed will not be growing leaves until spring, fertilization at this time is wasted.

WATER LIGHTLY

Water just enough to moisten the seed and the soil. Water especially lightly if the ground is frozen hard.

Mixing all seeding, fertilizing, and watering as with a hydrospreader may be easier, but performing each step separately ensures the best use of the fertilizer and proper placement of the seed.

MULCHING

Mulching is normally not needed except on steep slopes. Use straw held in place with bailing wire or garden fencing, for even the toughest erosion areas.

IGNORE UNTIL MARCH

If normal adequate rain falls in March watering is not necessary. If March is dry, watering will be required. Fertilize with high nitrogen fertilizer and treat for broad leaf weeds and crabgrass in May after new plants have been mowed two or three times.

ANDERSON RENTALS

We have the equipment you need to perform this and many other lawn and garden tasks. Our equipment is the same equipment that the professionals use and is the best maintained in the industry… guaranteed. Our personnel is ready to assist you.