



Starting a New Lawn



In Northeastern Ohio, September is the best time to work on lawn health, (April is the second-best time). Whether starting a new lawn, overseeding, or seeding some patchy areas, plan on doing lawn tasks in fall or spring when the soil temperatures are warm, air temperature is cool, and the rain helps irrigate.

Installing a New Lawn-

- ✓ **Study the site. Measure** the lawn area to calculate materials needed and costs. Observe **light exposure** (sun or shade). Watch for **drainage** issues and puddling, (water should always drain away from the home). Is the lawn in a **high traffic area** or play area where careful seed selection and regular overseeding may be needed?
 - ✓ **Perform a soil pH test.** The ideal pH range is **6.2 to 7.0** (slightly acidic to neutral) for lawns.
 - ✓ **Preparing soil.** Start by **removing weeds** or unwanted grass by hand or use a general herbicide, (e.g., KleenUp®, Roundup® or Captain Jack's™ Deadweed Brew). After the ground is weed free, lightly **till, hard rake or dethatch** the area, removing any debris. Use the pH test results to **add soil amendments**. If the pH is lower than 6.2, add lime at the rate of 50 #/1,000 sq. ft. or 1 bag of Lightning Lime per 5,000 sq. ft. to raise it. A pH greater than 7.0, apply soil sulfur at 20#/ 1,000 sq. ft. For poor draining, compacted clay soils, add Espoma® Soil Perfector® or gypsum to increase drainage. Work in the amendments and level/**rough grade** the soil with a hard rake. Fill in low areas with topsoil or Sweet Peet® so the grade moves water away from structures and 1" below sidewalks and driveway level.
 - ✓ **Selecting grass seed.** Petitti's, Scotts, or Jonathan Green grass seed mixtures are wise choices because they contain diverse, **disease resistant** grass varieties formulated for specific lawn areas such as high traffic to dense shade.
 - **Kentucky bluegrass**-popular for full sun/light shade, goes dormant during hot summers, slow to germinate
 - **Fine fescues, red & creeping fescue**-most shade tolerant, tolerates poor soil, good drought tolerance
 - **Perennial ryegrass**-for sunny spots, fastest germinator, anchors soil, moderate drought tolerance
 - **Tall fescues**- full sun to part shade tolerant, deep green, best drought tolerance (deep roots) and hardy
- When purchasing seed pay attention to the label, highest **germination rate**, lowest **percentage of undesirable seeds**, and **rate of coverage**; on average **5# seed/1,000 sq. ft.** for new lawns.
- ✓ **Apply the grass seed** by hand or with a spreader, careful not to overlap passes. Lightly **rake the seed** into the amended soil and spread a **starter fertilizer** or lawn food that is labeled "for seeding" over the top.
 - ✓ **Cover** a large lawn area with **seeding straw (1 bale/500 sq. ft.)** or apply Sweet Peet® or topsoil up to 1/4" deep.
 - ✓ **Water** the area lightly 1-2 times daily to keep moist. Do not let seed dry out. Start watering 1" per week after the seed fully germinates to get the roots to establish deeper into the soil.
 - ✓ Keep the **new lawn mowed** at 2-3" and remove any leaves or debris so they do not smother your new grass.

Overseeding an Existing Lawn-

In established lawns, problems may develop over time in certain areas or patches. Weeds, drainage issues, compaction, fungal disease, insect, and rodent problems are the most common causes of bare spots, thinning, and overall poor lawn growth. Overseeding can be done each fall/spring just to thicken perfectly healthy areas.

- ✓ **Apply a selective, lawn safe, weed control**, (e.g., Weed Beater® Ultra or Tenacity®), carefully follow directions.
- ✓ **Mow the lawn closely** (2") after weeds have been eliminated.
- ✓ **Dethatch** or aerate the lawn as needed; thatch is harmful when it exceeds 1/2". Clean up debris.
- ✓ **Follow the directions above:** amend soil, rough grade, apply seed, (**1-2# seed/1,000 sq. ft.** for overseeding), apply starter fertilizer, cover, and water.
- ✓ **For small bare patches**, Scotts® EZ Seed® or PatchMaster® are both good products to use because the seed, fertilizer, and mulch are together in one package.