

PLANTING A LAWN (Best times: April, May, June, September, October)

PREPARING THE SOIL

- Good soil preparation before planting is essential for your lawn's long-term performance and health, preventing many problems in the future.
- The best method is to rototill 2-4" of compost into existing soil. This will give grass a deeper area to develop a strong root system, causing it to be healthier and more drought resistant. This method can activate dormant weed seeds in the soil. Seed immediately or allow weeds to sprout and remove them before applying grass seed.
- An alternate method is to spread 2-3" of **Planting Mix** over the existing soil before seeding.
- When reseeding an existing lawn, topdress by spreading **Planting Mix** on the existing lawn to level and fill in bare areas.
- Rake the area smooth, removing rocks and debris.
- Use a water filled lawn roller to lightly compress the soil. Go over area several times then rake the area to smooth it.

SEEDING

- Grass seed requires air temperatures between 60-75°F to germinate. Sky carries three blends of fescues and ryegrasses that perform particularly well in our NW climate:
 - **Custom Shade** is a resilient seed blend that bounces back quickly from drought and stress and grows well in sun or shade.
 - **Overseed** is a balanced blend for new lawns, overseeding or spot repair in full sun.
 - **Showcase** is the lushest lawn blend but requires more maintenance.
- Apply **seed, lime, and starter fertilizer** in the rate recommended on the packaging, in any order.
- Cover seed with a very thin (1/4" max) layer of screened compost or peat moss to hide seed from birds and hold moisture.
- Other products that can be used to cover seed include: **EB Stone Top Coat** (very finely screened compost with a natural wetting agent) or **Soil Building Conditioner**.
- Roll once more with a half empty roller.
- **Keep seed consistently moist for 2-4 weeks. This is the most essential step. Spray or set sprinklers to come on 2-3 times a day.**
- Mow the tender young grass when it reaches 3" or taller. Mowing does not harm young grass and will encourage fuller growth.

LAWN MAINTENANCE

WATERING

For most of the year, watering your lawn may not be necessary. During dry spells, in order to keep your lawn from going dormant you need to provide 1-2" of water per week. To measure how much you are watering, use a wide shallow container placed under sprinklers. To further support root growth, consider topdressing with compost. If you do let your lawn go dormant you still need to water once a month to not lose your lawn entirely.

FERTILIZING

Fertilizers can help improve your lawn's health and resistance to disease. There are several organic options available. Apply fertilizer to lawns and thoroughly water in. At minimum, fertilize your lawn in April and October, which are key times for supporting root growth. Best results are obtained by fertilizing once each season. **Lime** is used to adjust the acidity of our Pacific NW soils and is applied to lawns every 2-3 years.

RESEEDING

Spring and fall are the recommended times to reseed lawns. Grass seed requires air temperatures between 60-75°F to germinate and **seed needs to stay consistently moist for 2-4 weeks**. Before reseeding, thatch if necessary and aerate compacted areas. Mow about 30% shorter than normal, then follow instructions for seeding a new lawn.

MOWING

Year-round mowing height should be 2-3". You can mow at a higher length in summer to reduce water needs. Leaving grass clippings on your lawn can be beneficial. They are about 90% water and 9% fertilizer. Use a mulching blade or cut at most 1" at each mowing.

- Mow frequently.
- Cut only when grass is dry.
- Keep mower blades sharp so clippings are cut as small as possible.

COMMON LAWN PROBLEMS

MOLES

Moles eat worms and insects and destroy the appearance of lawns with the mounds of dirt they leave from their tunneling activity. They can be extremely hard to trap or kill. Molemax is an organic deterrent that will cause moles to vacate the area almost immediately.

MOSS

Moss competes with lawns in shaded areas, especially in winter. If the moss growth is heavy, use a lawn moss killer in March, then rake out the dead moss two weeks later, and if needed reseed the bare patches. To prevent moss from growing in the winter, use moss killer in the fall. Moss killers are made from iron and are safe for people and pets. Moss issues may be helped by correcting any underlying drainage issues or limbing up trees that shade the lawn.

WEEDS

Many common lawn weeds (e.g. dandelions) are symptoms of low soil fertility and compacted soils. They can be reduced by correcting these issues.

Broadleaf weeds are best controlled by physical removal. A weed killer can be applied in warmer weather. Granular weed & feed products typically work on large-leaf weeds; on small-leaf plants like clover use liquid herbicides. Most products work best between 65-75°F; never apply when temperatures are over 80°F.

Weed grasses are best controlled by digging them out by hand. Unfortunately, there is NO product that kills undesirable grasses without also killing desirable ones. For pre-emergent weed control, you can use corn gluten, which acts as an organic “weed & feed” by feeding existing grass while suppressing seed germination. Remember, pre-emergent herbicides will not kill existing weeds and cannot be used in areas where you may want to reseed shortly after. Two or three applications between October and May may be needed to control weed grasses like annual bluegrass.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have any other questions or concerns regarding your lawn. We're always here to offer environmentally conscious, cost-effective solutions to your gardening challenges.