



Box 1676
Camrose, AB
T4V 1X6
(780) 678 6450
info@scottsqqualitylawncafe.ca
scottsqqualitylawncafe.ca

“Your Home Turf Advantage”

GRASS SEEDING FOR NEW LAWNS

We welcome your questions about lawn care... A common question that comes up every year is...

“What kind of grass seed is best for a new lawn?”

It’s usually asked by a client that’s perhaps wanting to add some new lawn to their yard – Maybe they got rid of some trees or a garden and want to plant grass there now. Or maybe they tore out a section of very old neglected lawn to reseed it from scratch... Perhaps it used to be a part of their backyard that they used as an additional parking area for their trailer, but now they don’t need it anymore and they want to turn it into some additional backyard lawn.

Or maybe they’re a brand new client who just bought a brand new lot that’s never had any grass seeded on it yet... Or maybe they are considering planting sod on it... We can definitely offer some good advice.

However, if you’re not doing any seeding from scratch to either add to your lawn or create a new lawn, but are only wanting to overseed or patch up some thin or dead lawn areas, that’s a different lawn care article we can email you... *“Overseeding For Existing Lawns”*. Give us a call if we can help you with that, too.

So, before we talk about the best grass seed for seeding a new lawn, there’s a few other parts of the *“healthy lawn equation”* that need to first be considered. **The choice of grass seed is important but there’s much to be talked about even before that... There’s a fair bit to consider when planting a new lawn... The goal after all is said and done is that you want to have a vibrant, lush, healthy-looking lawn, right?**



For some people having the best groomed lawn on the block is almost a status symbol. But for most of us our lawn is simply where most of our personal recreation and home-based outdoor living takes place. Besides being a great place to spend time with our family and friends, lawns do many things for us that we may not have even realized, stuff that would be in the “we take it for granted” category — They not only produce ample oxygen as a by-product even more so than trees, but they also filter pollution, buffer temperatures, absorb water and prevent soil from washing away, too, to name but a few...

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I think it's fair to say that for most of us, our yards as well as our daily home-based activities would be very different if we had no lawns to enjoy.

Needless to say, some of what follows is actually in the domain of *landscaping*, but we'll keep it simple. We're not equipped to be wearing the landscaper's hat – our expertise is lawn care.

If any preliminary DIY prepping of your yard for planting a new lawn requires a bit more than the basics we'll cover below, give a landscaper a call, and they should be able to help you with that. But then once your grounds are prepped and ready for planting a lawn... give us a call or consider the following advice –

PLANNING & PREPPING THE SOIL FOR A NEW LAWN

It would seem easy..

Throw some grass seed on the dirt, water it a bit, add some sun and presto! We have a new lawn! Uh.., yah, not quite that easy. This will take some planning and some effort... as we all, of course, know...

Firstly, survey your landscape... Do your own site assessment... Ask yourself some key questions first... Get your head around the task that's before you... This surely isn't going to all be done in one afternoon, right? Just envision what it's going to look like when it's all done... It's going to be great!

So what's my main purpose? Decorative or functional lawn?

Is it going to get a lot of use, a lot of foot traffic, a lot of kids' playing on it?

And/or family & friends lawn-chairing on it for a bit of rest and relaxation?

Do I need it to be robust enough to handle ongoing sports and recreation, and playing lawn games on it?

Or is it more for looks and to add some great value to my yard?

Or is it all of the above or maybe even more?

Where am I wanting to plant the new lawn? Am I just expanding or adding to my existing lawn?

Or is this a brand new section of my yard that I'm turning into a lawn area?

I've got to be sure to think ahead a bit, too... May there be any adjacent flower or rock gardens?

Or perhaps a patio added or a firepit in its midst some day?

Oh, and what about our dog as I know they can be tough on lawns?

Is there lots of sun or are there lots of trees nearby?

Are they going to compete for the same water and nutrient resources as my new lawn?

And as my neighbour said, don't forget about those illustrious root shoots that may pop up in our lawn every new year as those trees attempt to remind us of whose Boss Plant in our yard... Yah, right...

Is now the right time to do this? Is this the best time of the year for new grass to grow?

Hey, I think we're ready for this... This is long overdue... It's time for more green in our yard!!!

Hey, all of the above are some of the legitimate things to ask one's self...

So now that you've decided what to do... Let's get down to it!

FIRST THINGS FIRST...

*** Decide whether ¹ you're going to seed grass on top of the pre-existing soil, or whether ² you're going to be adding some additional better quality topsoil to give your new grass a better foundation.**

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IF YOU'RE NOT ADDING ANY ADDITIONAL NEW TOPSOIL —

- ✓ Be sure to first remove any weeds —
 - Hopefully, you didn't let them get out of control and were able to manually pull them out as they arose.
 - However do not spray any herbicide onto that ground (unless you've done this in advance and you know by reading the herbicide product label that there will not be any residual effects that will hinder seed germination... and let's hope there's been many rainfalls since then, too).
 - Why?
 - Because herbicide weed-killers are essentially chemicals so they will hinder new seed germination and some will leave residual chemicals in the ground long after sprayed which could adversely affect your lawn.

- ✓ Be sure to get rid of (hopefully not) any potential ants, earthworms, other insects, grubs, or worst yet, moles or gophers that may have been making a home in that ground —
 - This ground is for your new grass NOT any of these other potential usurpers no matter how much they may have laid claim to it.
 - Not quite sure how? Give us a call and we'll help you with some good advice.

- ✓ Be sure to remove any fallen branches or twigs, pine cones, spruce tree needles, etc., plus any non-organic debris (rocks, bits of concrete, wood, plastic, or anything else that shouldn't be there) —
 - The last thing you need under newly seeded grass or sod is some noticeable bump or small rise or hill due to some rock or whatever that was never removed.
 - Unfortunately, this might be unavoidable if you've got a tree root problem wherein they've already spread their roots barely below the ground surface with some protruding. And of course, removing that root might harm your trees... Poplar trees are particularly bad for this.

- ✓ Consider doing a DIY soil test to confirm what condition your ground or subsoil is in —
 - You can purchase inexpensive DIY ones in numerous places.
 - With these, you'll be able to check your subsoil's pH level, its inherent moisture level, etc.
 - In our region our soils tend to be on the slightly alkaline side of the pH spectrum.
 - There are always soil amendments available should you need to rebalance the pH (such as our Enrich Soil Enhancer product...MORE ABOUT THAT LATER)

- ✓ If the ground/subsoil you're planning to use is too compacted or dried out, you MUST loosen it up, aggressively rake it or turn it over a bit if need be to aerate it, too, but make sure it's not left clumpy —
 - If your ground is literally that compacted, you may want to either reconsider adding a fresh new layer of topsoil as the actual base above ground or at the very least mixing in some good compost-enriched top soil with the existing subsoil.
 - Common-sense would say that if you can't easily push a screw driver through the subsoil or grab some and easily crumble it in your hand, it's going to be challenging for any new grass to attempt to take root in it.
 - Worse yet... if your subsoil base is mostly compacted clay, with very little humus or organic matter at all, definitely reconsider adding a considerable depth of high quality topsoil above it as your new foundation, before seeding your grass.
 - You do not want to waste your efforts by attempting to seed a new lawn in ground that's simply too compacted and nutrient-deficient.

- ✓ If you feel you have no choice but to use your existing ground/subsoil but you know it's still far too compacted and dried out, then if need be, a rototiller can be very helpful to break up any blocky or compacted ground —
 - Of course, not bringing in any new topsoil may indeed save you some money, but as soon as you do this, your new lawn project has suddenly become a lot more labour-intensive, needless to say.

- After rototilled, be sure to mix in some additional new topsoil and compost or other soil amendments into it.
 - This will definitely help aerate your soil and provide additional nutrients, thereby providing a better foundation for your grass to take root.
 - After all is done, you want to be sure that you have a base foundation for your lawn of at least 4 to 6 inches (ideally 6 to 8) of good soil for the seeds to take root in.
- ✓ Ideally, be sure to level out your ground/subsoil to correct any grade issues —
- A slight gentle slope is fine.
 - ♦ But if every time it rains, water is flowing down your grade across your grass to some lower area and then pooling, it may to a certain extent be doing the same under your grass, too... thereby eventually causing you some problems.
 - Any sloped lawn may also drain away the water or moisture it depends on, and vital nutrients, as well as potentially hindering your grass from rooting deeply.
 - If that's your sloped situation or landscaping grade and design on purpose, just be mindful that you'll likely need to be watering more often to keep your new lawn area from drying out.
- ✓ Before you do any seeding on your now prepped ground/subsoil, give it a final loose raking a bit and then wet it down to soften it before you spread any seeds on top (MORE ABOUT THIS SOON).
- ✓ After you've spread your seeds, apply a light layer of compost or enriched topsoil on top of it —
- Only add up to a ¼ inch or less... just enough to hold the seeds down a bit but NOT to bury them completely. They still need to breath and get the sun and the water, etc.
 - If you don't do this, and it rains or you apply too heavy a watering pressure on the newly spread seeds, you're apt to scatter them or move them about so much so that your germination and seed coverage may be a bit thin or sparse in places. Putting a thin layer of compost on top will not only feed them some nutrients but also hold them in place. This will enable them to make good contact with the soil and thereby germinate more successfully and grow better.

IF YOU ARE ADDING A LAYER OF ADDITIONAL TOPSOIL AS A NEW FOUNDATION —

- ✓ You'll likewise want level ground with a minimal gentle slope for good drainage —
- You don't want any random low spots where rain water can pool nor do you want any uneven high spots where you might inadvertently scalp the lawn when mowing.
 - Be mindful that severely sloped lawns will usually have issues with water and moisture and nutrients leaching away downhill, as well as potentially hindering your grass from rooting deeply.
 - If that's your sloped situation or landscaping grade design on purpose, just be mindful that you'll likely need to be watering more often to keep your new lawn from drying out.
- ✓ **YOU NEED GOOD SOIL —**
- Be sure to add well-aerated loamy topsoil for the base foundation for your lawn —
- It's all the better if it's an all-natural, blended, compost-enriched soil with an ideal amount of humus and lots of organic matter within it.
 - The more organic matter within it, the better... the healthier your foundation will be...
 - There will be more nutrients available to the new seedlings.
 - ♦ Weed-free top soil is of course nice to have, but in reality, that can mean very different things...
 - ♦ Let that be from a good source and well-screened.
 - Note that some supposedly weed-free soils are essentially "heat-processed", to seemingly sterilize the soil and kill any weed seeds, but they're apt to be killing many other key microbial ingredients too... as well as lacking crucial nutrients, so be careful about weed-free claims or such soil products.
 - Be mindful that there, of course, are always soil amendments available should you need it (such as our ENRICH SOIL ENHANCER product...MORE ABOUT THAT LATER)

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- ✓ Ideally, you'll want slightly acidic soil with a pH of 5.8 to 6.5 —
 - This is best for the typical grass types in our region.
 - Warm-season grasses will tolerate slightly lower or more acidic pH, while cool-season grasses prefer a slightly higher or more alkaline pH, which is typical of our region.
 - If in doubt as to what relative pH your soil is, you can always pick up an inexpensive DIY soil tester which can measure pH levels and moisture levels, etc. If you're buying your soil from a reputable source, they should be able to tell you how acidic or alkaline their soil is, too.

- ✓ Lay down at least 4 to 6 inches (ideally 6 to 8 inches) of this topsoil as your base depth —
 - If there isn't enough high quality soil under your grass to root into deeply and to feed ample nutrients to those roots, your grass is going to be severely challenged and at risk of drying out or possibly dying, especially if you're experiencing any prolonged excessively hot and dry drought times during the growing season.
 - Cautionary Note: Be sure to spread that soil uniformly throughout the area to be seeded.
 - For example, if you've got 6 inches depth throughout most of the area and only 2 inches in another, you can pretty much guarantee that the lawn which doesn't have as much soil depth below it is apt to be struggling every year, especially if it's hot and dry conditions.
 - It's going to have a problem retaining proper moisture levels.
 - It's going to be challenged, lacking nutrients, and not likely deep-rooted; it's apt to be more susceptible to weeds and other lawn issues, therefore, too.

- ✓ **YOU NEED TO WATER PROPERLY** —

You'll need a regular supply of water routinely applied —

 - **You MUST keep the new seedlings moist so that they can germinate.**
 - Keep the soil consistently moist (but not overly wet) by lightly watering once a day during the first week. If it's very hot and sunny, you may need to consider lightly watering twice a day during the first week.
 - Water more heavily every other day for the next five days; this should encourage deep, healthy roots.
 - However, you don't want to use too much water pressure wherein your seeds are being battered or scattered around or bunching up due to the excessive force or heavy water droplets.
 - Always water in the morning, ideally before 9 a.m. (the earlier the better), to keep the water from evaporating in the sun's heat.
 - Assuming optimal growing conditions and good weather, it typically takes about four weeks on average to get to the height of the rest of your mature grass in your yard.
 - Watch for signs of overwatering, such as puddles or spongy soil.
 - You're not trying to drown your seeds.
 - If you notice these signs at any time or it's also been raining a lot, cut back on the watering immediately.
 - If you got a surprise heavy rainfall before your new seedlings have taken root, you may need to apply a wee bit more seed and a light bit of compost or soil to re-hold them in place again.
 - Heavy rainfalls tend to scatter your seeds everywhere or bunch them up and thereby negates what you did in spreading them out evenly.
 - Once your grass begins sprouting, you can cut back on the amount of water.
 - Instead, return to best watering practices where you water less frequently, but a little deeper.
 - However, be careful not to soak the soil repeatedly or you could encourage root rot diseases.
 - As the grass grows, allow the soil to dry slightly before watering again.

- **Cautionary Note:** The greatest danger to seedlings is overwatering and soaking the soil.
 - Drowning the seeds will inhibit germination and could also lead to fungal diseases.
 - The second greatest problem is if you have excessively hot and very dry periods that essentially cook the tender roots should the ground get too dry. You'll risk drying out the tiny roots if you're underwatering.
- However, once your lawn has grown enough to be regularly mowed, a good deep soaking in the early morning twice a week is far better than a brief shallow watering every day after you come home from work.
 - This will promote deeper root growth whereas if you're watering too frequently and putting down too little water per watering, it's going to create shallow-rooted grass which may end up having various problems.

✓ **YOU NEED AMPLE SUN** —

You need a minimum of 6 hours of sunshine each day on average —

- Grass will still grow on cloudy days.
 - In fact, during hot times it will thrive and still stay green if it's shaded from the scorching sun and heat.
- On hot days, your grass may also appreciate any large adjacent trees providing a bit of shade.
- If it's to the extreme with continuous excessively hot and sunny summer days, there's a risk of your grass drying out or burning, so to speak, especially if it's prolonged drought conditions.
- Be sure to keep your lawn properly watered and especially so during the hot summer months.
- If you can use some help, we have an excellent article on "*Proactively Preparing Your Lawn For Drought Conditions*". Give us a call and we can email it to you if you'd like.

✓ **YOU NEED ADEQUATE AIR TEMPERATURES** —

Air temperatures of 16 to 24°C are ideal during the growing season —

- Anything hotter can start to cause its own stresses to newly seeded lawns but if they've rooted deeply and they're healthy, they'll still grin and bear it and survive through any hotter temps.
- Lawns can obviously survive through the changing of seasons and any variances week to week but these air temperatures are its ideal range for germinating new seed and getting a good start on a new lawn.
- However, don't be trying to seed a new lawn if you're experiencing drought conditions... Wait for weather conditions to return to something more reasonable before seeding.

✓ **You'll want to minimize any foot traffic** —

- Healthy lawns can handle a fair bit of wear and/or abuse and recover relatively quickly, whereas newly seeded lawns are still on the tender side... and not apt to fare as well as more mature existing lawns.
- Minimize any traffic on newly seeded lawns until it's at least 2 to 3 inches in height and you've started mowing already.

NOTE: Always consider how temperature, sunlight, and rainfall conditions can affect your lawn. Do your own research as to your region's climate and typical soil pH and how it affects growing conditions. There's lots of free info to glean online, and of course, it would be our pleasure to help you if you have any questions, too. The more you learn and apply that learning to your ongoing lawn care practices, the more beautiful your lawn and yard is apt to be.

SOIL AMENDMENTS HELP CREATE OPTIMAL GROWING CONDITIONS

Before moving on to discuss how to seed your lawn, I wanted to provide a little more information about soil amendments or enhancements. The best lawns out there tend to be those that have also had sufficient attention paid to the soil that was laid down as their foundation.

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If you've only got 2 inches of soil as a base on top of clay below that, it may not matter how much you ever fertilize and add special treatments to your lawn or are an expert at best practices for lawn care... You need to have a proper healthy soil base as a foundation. There's no way around that. Everything else might just be *the cart before the horse* or sometimes only a *bandaid* at best. It's a never a short-cut to put down less soil as a base for a new lawn. That wrong decision would likely bite you back with ongoing lawn struggles. You'll then be spending more time subsequently addressing those issues than had you spent the time to put down a deeper soil base to begin with.

The following applies both to those planting new seed in existing ground or subsoil, as well as to those seeding in a new layer of topsoil above the original ground... These amendments can be a huge help to ensuring even better germination and seed growth.

- ✓ Depending upon your soil condition, amending your soil's pH can help your lawn grow better —
 - Adding lime or wood ash increases soil pH (making it more alkaline)
 - In our region our soil tends to already be more on the alkaline side so perhaps no need.
 - And adding some sulphur decreases it (making it more acidic).
 - Our Enrich Soil Enhancer spray product can also help restore pH balance to soil and grass.
- ✓ Compost and sphagnum peat moss can add crucial organic matter to your soil —
 - These two very common soil amendments can help re-balance alkaline soil or bring it slightly more toward the acidic side of the pH spectrum, if added and mixed-in, in sufficient quantities.
- ✓ Compost and other all-natural soil conditioners also act as a fertilizer and feed valuable nutrients to your soil which in turns helps your grass grow better —
 - They also aid in aerating the soil, helping it to more effectively metabolize their nutrient usage.
 - Compost and peat moss also help your soil retain moisture better... You don't want any water to wick away too quickly...
 - That's part of the reason why it's also better to thoroughly soak your lawn once or twice a week than to give it a little sprinkling every day that barely gets down to the roots before evaporating away.
 - Some of the water from a good thorough soaking will be retained for longer in the compost or peat moss and release it to your grass over a longer period of time, too.
- ✓ Once you've finished spreading out your topsoil with any added amendments, be sure to firm it up a bit with light rolling so that only light footprints appear when you walk on it —
 - You're not trying to re-compact it again, but you want to level out the grade in preparation for the new seed or laying new sod.
- ✓ After about 4 to 6 weeks, consider spreading some starter fertilizer on your newly seeded lawn —
 - Or after as long as the package instructions may state, before applying it to any newly seeded lawn — This will stimulate the ongoing growth and development of your grass roots.
 - A good starter fertilizer would be optimized for new grass and ideally contain more phosphorus in its NPK ratio.

***** SPECIAL NOTE *****

Scott's Quality Lawn Care offers an excellent proven "all natural" soil enhancer product, called ENRICH. It's consists of up to 3 spray applications per year and yields some rather noticeable improvements in lawns. It's a unique liquid formulation of over 50 of the highest quality plant extracts that serve as nutrients for existing microorganisms in the soil. The addition of these super-concentrated/super-charged plant-extracted growth hormones to the existing soil increases and stimulates the beneficial native microbiology within the soil – It literally feeds the existing microorganisms in your soil that help to bring back and repopulate any strains of dormant beneficial microbes, thereby increasing and enhancing more diverse microbial activity. As such, **as the name implies, ENRICH rejuvenates and enriches your soil...**

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Anything growing within it, is going to grow better. This in turn results in a multitude of benefits which will multiply over time. We encourage you to visit our website or give us a call to learn more about this remarkable ENRICH Soil Enhancer product.

WHAT TYPE OF GRASS IS BEST WHERE WE LIVE?

So, at the top of this article, the question was raised as to what grass seed is best for a new lawn...

We'll answer that but first, here's a few things to consider:

- ✓ You'll need to know what type of grass you have elsewhere in your yard (if this is a new section you're seeding) before you choose the seeds.
 - ◆ You want to choose a seed that is compatible with your existing grass, and normally the same as your grass that's elsewhere in your yard.
 - ◆ What I mean is, you don't want it to mature and then see that it looks a different shade of green or is a different looking kind of grass blade, etc. You ideally want all the grass in your yard to look of the same type or at least very similar.
 - **Cautionary Note:** Be careful about using bargain store seed brands for seeding new lawns.
 - I'd be the first to say you have to discern between what's merely lawn product marketing pitches versus what really matters in lawn seed and fertilizers...
 - However, the lowest cost bargain seed is often poor quality seed and may contain multiple undesirable varieties, resulting in some poor germination and poor growth results.
 - You may be lucky and get okay results or you may discover that some of it doesn't even germinate or creates a poor lawn – Look for a reputable seed brand and you should be fine.
- ✓ Also be mindful that some grass types are more equipped than others to withstand factors like shade, cold, heat, drought, etc., so climate and location need to be factored in when selecting the best grass for your lawn.
 - ◆ Our grass seed types for our region are typical cool season varieties such as turf-type tall fescue, or Kentucky bluegrass with fine fescue.

Is It Okay To Mix Different Types of Grass Seed?

- ✓ Yes. Mixing different grasses can actually be better than planting only one grass type.
 - ◆ But again, stick to what you already have in your lawn elsewhere in your yard, unless of course, those were mixed varieties, too.
 - ◆ You can combine the strengths of different grass types to make your lawn more tolerant of traffic, drought, heat, or shade.
 - ◆ Depending where you live and its climate, you should usually stick to either warm-season grass types or cool-season grass types, except in the case of ryegrass. As I said, ours are cool-season grass types.
 - ◆ For example: Kentucky bluegrass and fescue — Fescue is more drought-tolerant, and Kentucky bluegrass spreads very well on its own to fill-in thin or bare spots and repair damage. They compensate for each other's weaknesses.

Here are some other general grass seed guidelines to be mindful of, too —

It's important to mention these as there surely are differences in grass types. Some should not be mixed with others. Some are primarily for shade areas and others for full sun.

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Some blends are uniquely geared to address certain climates and issues and others are merely generic or shall we say, *all purpose*.

- ✓ Coarse Fescue Rule: Coarse fescue varieties are much larger plants having wider blades that were originally designed as pasture grass. They are often sold as lawn grass seed to those who do not know the difference. Stick with turf-type tall fescue if that is what you already have.
- ✓ It is okay to combine Kentucky bluegrass seed with turf-type tall fescue seed. Many professional seed blends use both because blades are similar in size and appearance and bluegrass spreads filling in gaps.
- ✓ Important Note on Turf-Type Tall Fescue: If you want the best looking grass, be sure to use a turf-type blend. The turf blends are the varieties that are being improved for appearance and deep green colour as well as disease resistance qualities. If you choose a pasture grass, such as Kentucky 31, you are missing out on all the science and genetic improvements that will give you a much better looking lawn. In addition, you get several different varieties in a single bag of turf-type so if one variety doesn't do well in your location or soil conditions, one of the others will. You don't get that with pasture fescue varieties.
- ✓ Fine Fescue Rule: Be careful when using fine fescue grass seed. Most varieties of fine fescue are used primarily as a shade grass. As such they will not do well in full sun. Varieties include creeping red fescue, chewings fescue, sheep fescue, and hard fescue. However, fine fescue varieties are often included in fescue seed blends because the grass will do well on shady sides of houses or under shade trees better than other grasses. Not all of our lawns are fully exposed to the sun.
- ✓ Important Note on Bluegrass Seed: Most bluegrass species spread by underground stems called rhizomes. The most popular seed type is Kentucky Bluegrass seed. The rhizomes sprout at various points along the stem producing a new plant identical to the mother plant. Each new plant will send out rhizomes that produce even more plants. Because of the way it spreads, healthy bluegrass lawns rarely need overseeding. Bluegrass is often included in some tall fescue seed blends.
- ✓ Older varieties of Kentucky bluegrass do better with infrequent fertilization. However, most new and improved varieties were designed to grow under more intense fertilization and are used by golf courses and well-maintained residential lawns.

As mentioned, most lawns in Canada consist of cool season turfgrass, which have their main growth periods in the spring and fall, and less during the heat of summer.

That being said, a lawn that's comprised of different grass species will tolerate a broader range of growing conditions and may be less vulnerable to pest damage than a lawn with only one specific grass variety.

Here are some more specifics – Most lawn seeds for our area are a combination of some of the following:

- ✓ Kentucky Bluegrass is the main grass seed in most lawn mixtures for several good reasons ---
 - It is a cool-season grass and has the deep blue-green colour that is so popular.
 - It is both cold-hardy and heat-hardy, which means it is dependable for many climates.
 - It prefers full sunlight especially in the morning, but a little shade is alright, too.
- ✓ Tall Fescue is a cool-season grass that grows well in sun or shade ---
 - It is very low maintenance so it's popular for just about any type of lawn.
 - It is compatible with other types of grass and has a deep root system, which is why it is a little more tolerant of times of drought and heat.
 - It is, in fact, the most heat-tolerant of all the cool-season grasses which is why it is the grass of choice for public areas and playing fields where there may not be much irrigation.

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- ✓ Fine fescues are more shade-tolerant and will do well on sites with only 4 to 6 hours of sunlight each day, or only late day sunlight.
- ✓ Ryegrass is a very strong grass type, tolerant of wear, and is suitable for sports fields or play areas ---
 - It can also sustain itself very well during winter and extended dry spells.
- ✓ Some cool season grass varieties (like Tall Fescues, Fine Fescues, Perennial Ryegrass) may contain beneficial fungi called endophytes, and may therefore offer more resistance to some common insect pests.
- ✓ Bentgrass species are not good for most home lawn situations because they tend to be higher maintenance.

Your yard may have a steep grade or slope, or perhaps it is heavily shaded by large trees, sheds or buildings. These special conditions may require different types of grass. As such, where conditions are more challenging for a lawn to grow well, you may want to try growing other ground cover or plants more adapted to the area. Check with your local nursery or garden center which may be able to help you choose plants for your particular growing conditions.

SEED VS SOD

It's entirely up to you as to which is better. The following will give you a good comparison between the two.



SOD -

- ✓ Provides an essentially *instant lawn* that's already been pre-grown to be thicker, lush and weed-free —
 - The fact is... healthy lawns don't give much room for weeds to occur.
 - New sod is already healthy and has the dense root structure ready and waiting to quickly grow into your prepared top soil... and weeds aren't likely to gain any foothold in the first year if well maintained.
- ✓ Sod is definitely more expensive than seeding —
 - However, for those that choose sod over seed, the benefits of less initial maintenance and a ready-made lawn ready for your use may outweigh the extra cost and effort it takes to lay the sod.
 - With sod you can be enjoying your lawn within 10 to 14 days whereas with seed, it's going to be considerably longer before it's thick enough and hardy enough for you to be walking on it or playing on it, or mowing it.
 - If you don't want to wait for newly seeded lawn to mature nor fend off any new weeds arising in the meantime, sod is the route to choose.
- ✓ Needs initial daily watering to make sure it establishes well and roots quickly —
 - Don't walk on it while it's wet.

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- Depending how quickly it's taken root, give it a week or two before you start walking on it or using it.
- ✓ Check to make sure that the sod varieties available in your area are the best for your site conditions —
 - Normally, any local sod farm selling sod in your region, is also going to ensure that it's the right kind of sod for your typical soil and growing conditions, but check nonetheless.
- ✓ If you decide to use sod, get a few pointers from the supplier on how to properly lay down sod for the best results —
 - For smaller lawns, it's definitely in the realm of a landscaping project you may be able to do yourself with the help of some family or friends.
 - For large areas, you may want to hire some professional landscapers to lay the sod as it can be a rather labourious undertaking on a larger scale. It's those larger projects where you may also want to include other landscaping features, too.
- ✓ If doing it yourself, use a roller to press the sod down for good sod-to-soil contact —
 - You want to make sure it lays flat on your topsoil with no air gaps below nor overlapping edges of sod above nor gaps between sod pieces.

SEED -

* Some of the following reiterates what has been mentioned elsewhere in this article. It serves as a good summary of the key points.

- ✓ Normally bags of seed are apt to contain a greater variety of grass species than sod —
 - This may be on purpose for some of the reasons previously mentioned.
 - However, you may be able to buy a specific variety at some garden centres, if preferred.
- ✓ Initially needs to be watered more than for sod —
 - Sod has the advantage here in that it takes root faster and you'll be into your normal maintenance routine and watering routine a lot faster than with seeded lawns.
- ✓ It will take longer before your first mow with newly seeded grass —
 - Be careful on those first few mows with the wheels of your mower when turning as your lawn may still be a little on the thinner side till it's fully matured and filled in a bit better... You don't want to be leaving tread marks everywhere.
- ✓ Grass started from seed can be more vulnerable to competition from other plants in its first year than at any other time —
 - Weeds, in particular, may be a challenge as newly seeded lawns tend to be thinner initially, thereby leaving room for weeds to occur.
 - Remove those weeds as soon as they occur before they get any chance to spread themselves... The same applies for any fungus or mushrooms should they occur if you're getting a lot of rain and they're suddenly rearing their heads.
- ✓ The best time to seed new grass is in mid-August to early September —
 - This is on the assumption that you're not in the midst of mid to late summer drought conditions...
 - Most weeds grow slowly in the early fall and will compete less with the newly germinating seed, hence why it's a good time to plant as long as it gets a chance to fully mature before the cold weather sets in.
- ✓ If you decide to use seed, choose the best possible seed mixture based on your site assessment —

- With a little of your own research and some common-sense, based on your soil and growing conditions, you should be able to buy a good seed mix that's optimal for your area.
- ✓ Follow the directions for your seed mix —
 - Your site conditions will determine how much seed to use.
 - If you put down too much seed and it's over crowded, so to speak, some will not germinate...
 - Plus it will cause undue competition for resources such as light, water, and nutrients and the new grass seedlings will struggle as a result.
 - It may also attract the birds' attention as they feast on the abundance of seeds.
 - And if you put down too little, it will be a little too thin or have bare spots once it starts growing and you'll surely be wanting to be adding some more subsequently...
 - You want your grass to grow in with an even density and thickness...
 - If there are bare spots in its density it may make room for weeds to grow, etc.
 - ✓ Evenly spread the seed, then lightly rake it, and/or very lightly spread a bit of topsoil dressing or organic mulch onto it, not enough to bury it which would hinder its emerging, but rather just to lightly anchor it in place should it get windy or raining heavily —
 - As the grass seed germinates, the mulch discourages birds from eating it, and continues to decompose, enriching the soil with nutrients.
 - Lightly covering the seeds can also help lock in moisture to keep them from drying out, so they can sprout more successfully.
 - ✓ Water lightly and often to maintain even moisture on the seeds in the top layer but avoid creating any puddles
 - ✓ Be mindful of a few other seed germination hindrances ---
 - Germination decreases as the seeds gets older.
 - Applying any herbicide to your newly seeded grass before it's had a chance to fully mature and be mowed at least a couple times, will hinder germination.
 - Also, hold off on fertilizing our new lawn until you've mowed a couple times at least, too, typically about 4 to 6 weeks later, as it's too stressful on new seeds and newly emerging grass.

How Much Seed To Apply?

Firstly, be aware that it is possible when seeding your lawn to put down too much seed. **Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations on the amount of seed to spread.** It is different with different seed varieties. The rates can be adjusted depending on the desired thickness of your lawn. But try not to apply *too much* seed, and I emphasize "*too much*". Thick, vibrant lawns are created over time as the grass grows and mature and enlarges its own footprint, so to speak. Applying so much seed in an attempt to get a super thick lawn in only a few months may lead to overcrowding as the grass matures. Too much seed won't establish proper seed-to-soil contact and is apt to be washed away by the rain or eaten by birds, too.

HOW TO SEED YOUR LAWN — SPREADING THE GRASS SEED

You want to be sure to sprinkle the seed onto the grass evenly.

Needless to say, spread seeds when the winds are calm so that the seeds are distributed evenly.

The methods used to spread the seed can vary depending upon your yard size. Any method you choose to evenly distribute your grass seed can work well. Fortunately, seeding lawns doesn't require expensive equipment.

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✓ **FOR LARGER AREAS -**

- A drop or broadcast spreader is ideal if you have a large lawn. People who do their own fertilizing, will oftentimes use the same spreader they fertilized with.

Via a drop spreader:

- Fill the drop spreader with your chosen grass seed mixture.
- Adjust the settings according to the directions on the package label, and apply over the entire area, refilling as needed.
- Drop spreaders are more accurate when working in tighter areas with lots of landscaping, narrow lawn areas, tight turns, planting beds, around flower gardens, sidewalks and ponds.
- They're ideal for lawns that are less than 5000 sq ft.
- A drop spreader drops the product directly underneath it as you push it, giving you more control over the target area.
 - It will drop the seed at precisely the same width all over.
- You have to be sure you are walking in a straight line.
 - Any swerving will result in missed areas.
- Don't forget to do a second pass at a right angle to the first as you want the best coverage you can get.

Via a broadcast spreader:

- A broadcast spreader is for larger lawns that are 5000 to 20000 sq ft.
- This is better suited to wider areas containing "straight runs" without many tight areas and turns.
- A broadcast spreader distributes the product in a broad, overlapping pattern, which helps you cover a lot of ground in a relatively short time.
 - It will cover three to four times the width of the spreader.
- Remember that the seed is lighter than fertilizer, so it will not broadcast as far as fertilizer does.
- If the openings in the bottom of the hopper are too small for the seed size, it could easily clog.
 - If this happens, increase the size of the opening in the hopper and walk a little faster to compensate.
- Also, as previously mentioned, try to spread the seed when the air is calm.
 - Even with a small breeze is all that is needed to prevent an even spread, so you'll need to compensate for that too.

✓ **FOR SMALLER AREAS -**

- If you have a small area of around 1500 sq ft or less, that you're seeding, you can use a handheld spreader or hand-held rotary spreader.
 - A hand-held spreader can be powered by a battery or a crank, and as you walk, it dispenses the product in front of you.
 - These are generally inexpensive and spread the seed more evenly than sowing seed by hand.
- Divide the seed you have in half. Spread the seed in one direction, then, broadcast the other half at a right angle to the first direction you did.
 - This technique will give you the best coverage.

FERTILIZING THE NEW GRASS

At Scott's Quality Lawn Care, we only offer a combination Liquid Fertilizer and Broadleaf Weed Herbicide spray regimen of up to 4 applications per growing season. Some call it a "weed & feed" type of spray package...

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This has proven to be very effective for our clients and also saves them some money if they were otherwise buying these elsewhere as two separate services or types of products.

SPECIAL NOTE: However, as mentioned earlier, note that ALL herbicides, including ours, will hinder new seed germination. It would be too hard on the new seedlings attempting to grow. Therefore, if you're seeding a brand new lawn, you need to forego, for the time being, any herbicide treatments unless done in advance of seeding. Even then be sure you have read the product label and understand the herbicide's residual activity in the soil. Then once your newly overseeded lawn has firmly established itself and you've mowed it at least a couple times, (perhaps 4 to 6 weeks after seeding, depending how fast it's growing) then it's okay to get back to normal herbicide treatments for killing any weeds that may arise. At that point, we'd highly recommend our Fertilizer & Weed Control spray applications.

Newly seeded grass needs to ideally first establish its roots and crowns before it's able to handle the additional stress of applying any fertilizer and herbicide to it. You don't want to be applying it too early. If it's a starter fertilizer only, it should be optimized for your new seedlings and should be fine. But generally speaking, newly seeded lawns need some weeks for those new seedlings to mature first and thereafter it'll be no problem applying any additional fertilizer and/or weed control treatments on a periodic basis.

NOTE: If the particular seed mixture you've chosen to use already contains fertilizer, you may skip any fertilizing after doing any seeding and wait till a later time in the growing season to apply more if deemed necessary or as part of periodic regimen for keeping your lawn in the best condition.

NOTE: Also be mindful that to avoid any potential grass blade scorching or burning, with your eventually-matured new lawn, apply fertilizer evenly on an overcast day when it's not too hot. Ensure you water-in the fertilizer after applying it, or if you're lucky enough and have applied it just before a rainfall, then that should be enough to reduce any risk of potential scorching of your lawn.

As mentioned starter fertilizers are specially formulated for new grass. They help the seedlings establish strong roots and sprout faster.

***** Alternately, an excellent proven product we do offer is our Enrich Soil Enhancer spray program, as previously mentioned. Enrich is an *all-natural* proprietary liquid formulation of over 50 of the highest quality plant extracts that serve as nutrients for existing microorganisms in the soil beneath your grass.** The addition of these super-concentrated/super-charged plant-extracted growth hormones to the existing soil increases and stimulates the beneficial native microbiology within the soil – As the name implies, Enrich rejuvenates and enriches your soil... Anything growing within it, in this case newly seeded grass is going to grow significantly better. If you're not aware of our Enrich product, contact us and we'll send you some information on how Enrich can benefit your lawn.

AVOID MOWING OR HEAVY TRAFFIC ON THE NEW GRASS

- Allow your new seedlings to sprout and grow by minimizing traffic on it for at least 2 to 3 weeks, or until those new seedlings have grown 1 to 2 inches tall.
- Likewise, if it's sod you planted, give it some time to root and attach itself firmly into its soil base.
 - The last thing you'd want to do is start mowing it only to discover that it hasn't really secured itself in place just yet. Worst-case if you wait a little longer to allow it do so, it'll just be a little longer... and that's not so bad as you'll soon enough mow it to the preferred height you want it at... but don't rush things... give it time.
- Wait to mow the lawn until the new grass reaches the same height as the established grass elsewhere in your yard.
 - Try to time it so that you're mowing all your lawn areas in your yard at the same time, not part of it today and another part tomorrow, or days later, and so on... (if only to make it easier for yourself and have all the lawn looking uniform and consistent)

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- Pay extra attention to the first mow after seeding; just remember that your lawn is still getting established and needs a little extra care.
 - The new seedlings need time to catch their stride, so to speak...especially if you're experiencing any hot and dry conditions.
 - Give them whatever time they need to grow – The taller height you allow them to begin with allows them to root more deeply as well as shade themselves a bit, too.
 - After your new seedlings have grown out and matured and look like they're ready for mowing, you can revert back to your normal mowing height and lawn care routine for that time of the year.

ROUTINE MAINTENANCE THEREAFTER IS A MUST

Once your newly seeded or sodded lawn has started growing, it is important to continue to properly maintain your lawn, and to deal with any potential lawn problems that may arise, as they occur. Once your grass has grown and you're seeing the results of your efforts, you should have no regrets for all that hard work and you'll be able to enjoy a healthy, beautiful lawn for years to come!

***** SPECIAL NOTE *****

We love helping our clients have great-looking lawns! Of course, we always welcome your inquiries, but we also want to help educate you, too. So many of you have told us how much you appreciate the articles we make available to you.

If there are any questions you may have about your lawn or any challenges or problems you may occasionally encounter with your lawn, don't hesitate to give us a call. As with the above info article you've just read, we also have other highly beneficial lawn care articles, too...

Here are some we've created to support you with your lawn care efforts. They can help you identify any problems as well as offer some possible solutions for some of those occasional challenges lawns can encounter.

These info articles are not meant to be one-time definitive cures for whatever might ail your lawn. We all wish it was only that simple... But, there are no magic "spray this once and your lawn will be perfect thereafter" solutions... Unfortunately, those don't really exist, as much as we might all like them to. However, there are many things you can do to get your lawn in great shape and keep it that way. We encourage you to glean what you can from any of the following articles that may interest you. And for what you're not sure about, give us a call, let's talk about it, and we'll do what we can to help you.

You may reach us at 780-678-6450 if you'd like to receive any of these via email. It would be our pleasure to do our part to help you "make your lawn the envy of your neighbours"...

From Our "**PROACTIVE LAWN CARE**" Series Of Articles —
7 Steps To A Great Lawn
Caring For Our Lawn Over The Winter
Proactively Preparing Your Lawn For Drought Conditions

...See more on next page...

From Our **“WHAT YOU’RE NOT TOLD”** Series Of Articles —
What You’re Not Told About All-Natural & Organic Lawn Care Alternatives
What You’re Not Told About Bats & Their Guano

From Our **“WHY?”** Series Of Articles —
Why Is My Grass So Thin?
Why Dead Spots On My Lawn?
Why Am I Getting Mushrooms In My Lawn?
Why Are The Pine Needles Killing My Grass?

From Our **“HOW TO GET RID OF...”** Series Of Articles —
How To Get Rid of Ants
How To Get Rid of Dew Worms
How To Get Rid of Fairy Rings
How To Get Rid of Quackgrass
How To Get Rid of Thistles

From Our **“DAMAGE BY DOGS & OTHER CRITTERS”** Series of Articles —
Fixing & Preventing Dog Spots
Damage Caused by Voles

From Our **“SEEDING LAWNS”** Series Of Articles —
Grass Seeding For New Lawns
Overseeding For Existing Lawns

From Our **“DIY”** Series Of Articles —
DIY_Alternate Ways To Remove Weeds In Gravel Areas

From Our **“COMMON LAWN FUNGAL DISEASES”** Series Of Articles —
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases (Compendium Of All Common Ones)
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_The Usual Causes
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Snow Mold
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Leaf Spot & Melting Out
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Ascochyta Turf Leaf Blight
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Brown Patch
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Summer Patch
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Pythium Blight
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Red Thread
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Rust Diseases
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Powdery Mildew
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Dollar Spot
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Fairy Ring

INFORMATION ON OUR FIVE PRIMARY LAWN CARE SERVICES —

FERTILIZER & WEED CONTROL:

Our Fertilization & Weed Control Program
Possible Reasons For Still Having Weeds
Ten Reasons Our Program is Different

...See more on next page...

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ENRICH SOIL ENHANCER:

Our Enrich Soil Enhancer Program

Different Soil Types Have Different pH Levels

WEEKLY MOWING:

How The Weekly Lawn Mowing Works

Our Quality Control Program

Ten Reasons We Are Different

CORE AERATION:

Why Aerate Your Lawn?

POWER RAKING:

Why Power-Rake Your Lawn?

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