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“Your Home Turf Advantage”

OVERSEEDING FOR EXISTING LAWNS

Having a healthy vibrant lawn is something most home-owners strive for. It adds beauty and value to your home and property. I think it's lush and green that we're all wanting...

Nobody likes having a lawn that's looking weak or thin or has those illustrious near-dead patches here and there... But sometimes our lawns can be challenged for whatever their reasons.

So it's not surprising that clients may occasionally ask us about “OVERSEEDING”. It's one means to get your lawn back in great shape.

In this article, we're going to give you the *what*, the *why*, the *when*, and the *how* of overseeding. This will be a detailed primer on Overseeding. This helpful info is going to enable you to do your own overseeding should you need it for your lawn. It's one of the best ways to restore your lawn's appearance and vitality. In fact, a healthy lawn is one that on its own, is actually not likely to give much foothold for opportunistic weeds to make a home.



WHAT IS OVERSEEDING?

✓ In the simplest of terms, overseeding is spreading new grass seed over your existing lawn that may be struggling to grow for whatever its reasons. It's a minimally invasive way to fill in any thinning or bare patches and get your lawn back to a healthier condition.

- ✗ You're NOT replacing any existing grass, you're only adding to it...
- ✗ You're NOT turning over the soil or anything laborious like that...
- ✗ You're NOT reseeding it as though you were ripping up the old lawn and starting over from scratch...

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Seeding from scratch to create a new lawn is the process of planting new grass seed in an empty or bare patch of ground but that's not what this article is about. If that's what you're wanting some advice on, please ask about our *Grass Seeding For New Lawns* article, and we can email it to you.

✓ When done right overseeding can significantly rejuvenate or reinvigorate an existing lawn... It will stimulate new growth so that it is greener, thicker, and more lush. You can even introduce enhanced varieties of grass to your lawn if desired, that may as such, make it more drought tolerant, etc.

BENEFITS OF OVERSEEDING

Overseeding has many substantial benefits for your lawn, with no downsides if you do it correctly.

Here are some of the common benefits —

✓ **A Thicker Lawn is a Healthier Lawn**

- Even a lawn that appears relatively healthy and green, can benefit from occasional overseeding. Some of our clients will even do it once a year to keep their lawn lush and thick.
- Bare spots and thin grass may be due to a struggling lawn, previous fungal disease issues that never fully recovered, or dog spots, so to speak... or perhaps simply the result of not enough grass seeds having germinated in the soil when originally seeded. Overseeding can correct these common issues.
- However, be mindful to select grass seeds similar to what your current lawn has. Otherwise, you may end up with some slightly different green colour and some grass blades that look a little different than what's already there. That being said, if you're overseeding a broader area or your entire your lawn and not just a few thinning patches here and there, you're not apt to notice any real differences as it will blend in as it grows and after a month or two of routine mowing it will all look pretty much the same.

✓ **Protection From Erosion**

- Directly related to the above, a thicker lawn means reduced water runoff especially if there's any slope or grade to your lawn.
- As the new seeds begin to germinate and root deeply, and the seedlings become mature grass, your lawn will have more means for absorbing any water and nutrients. A thicker overseeded lawn will also reduce any likelihood of standing water or puddles due to excessive rain or over-watering.

✓ **Greener Thicker Grass**

- As we all know, fertilizing is a necessary key component of any effective lawn care and maintenance strategy, but overseeding should not be overlooked.
- Whereas fertilizers can help make your grass strong and green, there must be some pre-existing grass seeded there for fertilizers to do their job most effectively. By that I mean, applying fertilizer to a thin patchy lawn doesn't magically make it suddenly grow new grass blades everywhere... Overseeding produces more new grass, and then once the fertilizer is applied it will help it grow and thicken and green up.

✓ **Can Help Control Weeds**

- Weeds don't like competition from healthy grass... so overseeding your lawn will create more grass and thicken up your turf.
- Healthy lawns do not give much foothold for any weeds to appear. Essentially, more grass means more healthy roots can go to work absorbing nutrients and choking out unwanted weeds that would otherwise may be attempting to take root.

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- It's a bit of *survival of the fittest* in that sense, you could say. Both the grass and the weeds are always competing for the exact same nutrients and water resources. They're both wanting to expand their roots under the ground... Struggling lawns will inevitably fall victim to weeds because there is not enough healthy grass there to overpower the weeds. But if you have more grass seed sown and growing vibrantly and rooting deeply, those weeds won't have much chance of spreading enough to become any serious problem.
- As I said, they don't like competition, but if there isn't any, they are very opportunistic and will move right in to take advantage of any struggling or thin areas within your lawn.

✓ **Can Help Lessen Fungal Diseases**

- Growing conditions throughout a typical growing season can occasionally favour the development of a fungal disease.
- Fortunately, they're usually only a temporary problem. Just like opportunistic weeds, fungal lawn diseases are another potential challenge that can occur with struggling or poorly maintained lawns. However, if you've overseeded your lawn, those patches of struggling infected turf will have a better chance at recovering. The more healthy grass you have growing, the less likelihood of a harmful fungal disease arising or spreading on your lawn.

✓ **Pest Prevention**

- Healthy lawns don't normally experience pest problems or grub issues.
- Lawn pests, such as ants, worms, lawn gnats, or even mosquitoes and wasps, are notorious for hanging out in and around damaged or struggling lawns. Any standing water that may have accumulated in thin or patchy grass areas can also create an ideal environment for pests, but overseeding will help prevent such issues.
- FYI... Allowing your lawn to grow a little taller before mowing it can also help as pests find taller grass potentially more irritating... They prefer to be closer to the ground. So, thicken your grass, fill in those thinning areas and don't give them any opportunities to make their home there.

WHY OVERSEED YOUR LAWN?

We touched on some of this above... Lawn overseeding is a great option for home-owners whose lawns have suffered from drought stress, insect or fungal disease damage, or are struggling due to other signs of decline such as thin sparse grass, bare patches or lack of colour...you name it.

Over time, grass gets old... It's normal to see a lawn get tired-looking after many years, and all the more so if it hasn't been properly or adequately maintained. Hopefully it hasn't been allowed to get in such a deteriorated condition that the only recourse is to replace it... But, more often than not, simply overseeding your lawn with newer, improved types of grass seed is often the best way to revive or reinvigorate it, thicken it, and improve its overall health and appearance. There are also newer grass varieties available that are more resistant to damage from drought, some fungal diseases and lawn damaging insects.

As previously mentioned, struggling worn-out lawns invite weeds, too. Remember what I said about survival of the fittest... You want to stack the odds in favour of your grass... Overseeding is a fast, inexpensive way to help bring your lawn back to its lush, green self without tearing everything out and starting over from scratch.

Overseeding after drought conditions can be particularly helpful –

In our region over the last few years, the climate generally seems to be trending toward drier and hotter weather and essentially drought conditions at times.

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Sometimes that occurs as early as the beginning of June after being inundated with far too much rain in the weeks preceding that... What used to happen occasionally later in August is now happening sooner... It seems to be becoming our new norm.

If your gardening and lawn care efforts don't necessarily seem to work quite as well or as automatically as they once used to, that's your garden's and your lawn's way of telling you it's having some serious challenges and difficulties transitioning from good weather and growing conditions to suddenly more intense or bad conditions... It's having a tough time adapting to those changes. It's not only people that have to deal with potential climate change... So does our lawn and our garden plants, flowers, trees, etc.

They'd also would prefer the magic fix for all their woes, but that just does not exist quite that way, unfortunately.

This is especially true for lawns. Those consecutive days or weeks of mid-30+ degrees C temperatures do their utmost at negating the moisture that's in the soil. Worst-case, it can get to where there's not enough water in the cell structure of the grass blades and they have no choice but go into self-protect mode and into temporary dormancy, but sadly some grass can die, too – leaving in its place brittle seemingly burnt dried out brown grass, with near-barren spots and weedy patches arising to take up that thinned out space.

OVERSEEDING CAN BE A BIG HELP.

Water is key as things slowly recover, but once conditions do get better, overseed those areas that need it the most. If there's no rain or there are watering bans in place, you'll have no choice but to wait a bit. But as soon as you can, overseed your lawn. Give it that chance to not only revive what already exists that has been taking a beating. But plant that new seed in its midst and water it... Slowly it'll start that new growth and you should see your lawn recover. New growth is contagious and soon enough it should all be bouncing back, unless some of it did, indeed, die out. Any weeds that arose whilst your grass was struggling may be short-lived in their spreading once your newly overseeded lawn has taken root and matured.

As I said earlier... you want to stack the deck in your lawn's favour and get as much new grass growing as you can amidst the old grass that took a beating... The sooner you do that, the sooner you can put a stop to what will be those opportunistic weeds' last uprising... And of course, once that new grass growth has begun to mature, revert back to normal proper lawn care practices. Get another application of our Fertilizer & Weed Control herbicide, etc... [MORE ABOUT THAT SHORTLY]

If you're experiencing drought conditions every year, we'd recommend overseeding every year, then, too. For most lawns that are in good shape, you may want to overseed perhaps every other year, depending upon your particular lawn conditions. Simply keep an eye on your lawn and overseed when it starts to look patchy or is thinning out and getting a little tired-looking. If you periodically do this as needs be, you'll be able to maintain a healthy lawn that will handle any challenges better and recover quickly.

WHEN TO OVERSEED YOUR LAWN

The best time to overseed your lawn depends on where you live. Our grass types here are cool season grasses. So in the cooler northern climates, like our region, the best time to overseed is in late summer to early fall, (assuming we're past any drought conditions or excessively hot and dry weather).

- ✓ Overseeding should ideally be performed at least 45 days before the first frost may arrive.
- ✓ In fall, the soil is normally still warm enough to support germination, but the temperatures aren't too extreme for the tender new grass shoots to develop and mature before winter arrives.
- ✓ Cool fall air stimulates growth, and soil moisture levels may be less variable by then and more favourable for seed germination as well.
- ✓ Since your trees are starting to shed their leaves, there should be plenty of sunlight for your new grass.

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- ✓ When you overseed, the soil temperature should ideally be between 12°C to 18°C. You may check soil temperature with a soil thermometer.
- ✓ Depending upon the weather, the young grass should have, hopefully, 6 to 8 weeks to become better established before temperatures drop too low and growth stops.
- ✓ And then the following next spring the young grass will have another month or two to keep on developing deeper roots before the summer heat sets in.
- ✓ Overseeding lawns in fall essentially gives the grass a head start – The grass roots will have become established before winter, which greatly reduces any potential loss should you have an excessively hot, dry start to next year’s growing season.
- ✓ The other advantage of overseeding in the fall is that there are usually less weeds still actively arising. By then any herbicides or other measures you may have been applying to your lawn will have done their job and any weeds should be few and far between. Your overseeded grass will have less to compete with from weeds by this time.
- ✓ Also, fungal diseases that may attack new seedlings are normally less active in the fall, too.

Spring is an alternate time if not completed in fall — but only as long as ground and air temperatures, and moisture levels are adequate, in which case, overseed as early as possible to allow seedlings enough time to establish before the summer heat begins. That being said, if there’s too much rain happening early in the growing season it’s better to wait a bit. It’s best not to overseed a wet lawn. Overseed when the soil is dry and there’s no heavy rain in the forecast for a few days. Otherwise, heavy rain could wash away the seeds before they have a chance to germinate.

Something to also keep in mind is that though it’s possible to overseed cool-season grasses in the spring since they can definitely grow actively during that time, it’s actually better to do it in the fall because there are fewer weeds around for the new grass to compete with for water and soil nutrients. If you overseed during the spring, you can be sure any weeds that attempt to arise in your lawn are going to be competing for those water and nutrient resources that your new seedlings would be requiring.

Generally-speaking, if you’re looking to keep your lawn looking great, it’s ideal to overseed your lawn on a regular basis, preferably every year. However, if your lawn has a lot of wear and tear or is experiencing some of the challenges or difficult conditions we’ve already referred to, you could consider overseeding both in the spring and fall to maintain healthy grass.

HOW TO OVERSEED YOUR LAWN

Overseeding your lawn isn’t a difficult process, but you need to follow some crucial steps to ensure successful germination.

1st – Preparing Your Lawn For Overseeding –

For overseeding, we’re of course, spreading that seed on top of existing grass with the desire that it makes its way down to the soil. One of the most common reasons for overseeding is because our grass is thinner than we’d like it to be... So therefore most of the seed you spread shouldn’t have much problem reaching the soil below. Indeed, for new seed to germinate it must come in direct contact with the soil. Seed will not germinate if it is only resting on top of grass or grass clippings, leaves, moss, or any other organic material.

- ✓ So, firstly determine where you plan to overseed, (i.e. those thinned out areas or any near-barren spots or dead spots, etc.)
- ✓ Then inspect your lawn for the presence of any thatch.
 - Thatch is that tightly intermingled compacted layer of living and dead grass shoots, decaying roots, perhaps some moss, and other organic debris between the layer of actively growing grass and the soil underneath it.

- Microbes breakdown this organic material into elemental components that the grass can utilize. However, if there's not enough of this beneficial microbial activity or the soil is severely lacking nutrients, or is dead, excessive thatch will accumulate. As such, it can end up forming a barrier, keeping moisture and air from getting down to the grass roots where it's needed.
- Or when overseeding, any excessive thatch layer can prevent seeds from making direct contact with the soil.
- A little bit of thatch is okay. But if too thick, its best to de-thatch/power-rake and aerate your lawn before overseeding [MORE ABOUT THAT SHORTLY].
- Or if you're only filling in some thin or near-barren patches, you'll need to remove the thatch and dead grass before spreading seed in those areas.
 - You'll need to loosen the soil a bit.
 - Grass seed won't sprout well if you just toss it on top of compacted soil.
 - Rough up the surface of those near-barren soil/dead grass patches with a stiff-tined leaf rake, garden rake or claw-type cultivar.
 - If it's for patches of thin grass, you may carefully do the same with those if the soil is compacted... as you want to make it easy for the new seeds to get into the soil... but don't pull out what little grass may be there.

2nd – Dethatching & Aerating Your Lawn –

As mentioned, for new grass to grow, the seeds have to be able to reach the soil. Dethatching and aerating your lawn before spreading the seed can help with that. This step isn't absolutely necessary, though we highly recommend it. It will lead to more successful seed germination.

- ✓ First, dethatch the lawn if the layer of thatch in your yard is thick enough that you can't see any soil through it.
- ✓ After dethatching, aerate the lawn by poking holes in the soil with a core aerator machine.
 - ◆ We have the equipment and can offer both of these services to you.
 - ◆ They will relieve compacted lawn and soil problems.

As you prepare to overseed your lawn, this is also the perfect time to core aerate. Core aerating is the process of pulling out a plug or core of grass and soil. Heavy rain or watering should precede aeration for effective core depth. Even the heaviest aerators will have a hard time penetrating the ground if it is too dry. Don't worry about picking up the cores as they will breakdown naturally over time and with rain, etc.

You are trying to help air and moisture to be able to reach the roots of any new seeds you're planting. Plus those same holes made by the core extraction will be ready to receive the new seed you'll be spreading.

3rd – Mow The Existing Lawn To A Shorter Height –

Set your lawn mower height to two inches lower than what is typical. This is generally NOT the guideline for proper lawn mowing. However, in preparation for overseeding, a shorter lawn will help enable those seeds to make it down into the soil.

- ✓ After mowing, be sure to remove/bag any clippings from the lawn and rake up any remaining loose thatch and debris that could block the seeds.
- ✓ It's crucial that those new seeds have better access to the soil underneath and can receive sunlight and water directly. **Better soil contact = faster seed germination.**
- ✓ Needless to say, don't forget to reset your mower blades back to a higher setting after the overseeding is complete and resume a normal mowing height as you typically wouldn't want to cut the grass this short.

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4th – Rake To Remove Any Debris –

After mowing and removing/bagging all those clippings, be sure to rake up anything leftover on your lawn, whether that's some loose grass clippings, fallen leaves, twigs, branches, or other debris that might get in the way between the seeds and the soil. Of course, remove any boulders, stones, etc., that may be lying around anywhere.

5th – Amend & Enrich The Soil –

If you want to be sure about the condition of the soil beneath your grass, we can do a quick test on your lawn for you. It's actually a good practice to get into, to test your soil periodically throughout the growing season. Or, you can pick up an inexpensive at-home soil pH testing kit from many a store. This will help you determine if your soil is ready to receive and nourish seeds. It can indicate the acidity versus the alkalinity of the soil beneath your grass, so you will know what amendments, if any, might be necessary. I won't generalize about this right now, but we can surely advise on any amendments you may need for your lawn's soil before overseeding.

That being said, **we do offer our Enrich Soil Enhancer which is an excellent soil additive that can do wonders for any lawn or grasses, or plants of any kind for that matter.** Contact us if you'd like us to email you some information about our Enrich product. There's never too much of Enrich that you can apply to your lawn. It will definitely help with any new seed germination, too.

PLEASE NOTE: To Cover or Not to Cover Seeds???

Generally when overseeding lawns, the existing grass, once it's grown back to its normal height again, will provide cover and shade to your new seedlings while they're growing.

Here's a couple recommendations for you, too...

Either of the following is fine. We say YES to lightly covering the seeds.

- ✓ If desired, lightly spread a very thin layer of topsoil or better yet some mixture of nutrient-rich compost and soil over the lawn once you've spread the seeds throughout.
 - ◆ It will help the new grass grow quicker and thicker. ¼ of an inch depth is plenty.
 - ◆ You don't want to add too much though as you're not trying to bury the seeds, you're simply wanting to help them reach the soil below and settle in place. And as that scattered soil may get a little wet from rain or morning dew, it will also ensure that your new seeds are, indeed, making contact with soil.
 - ◆ But... they still need to be exposed to sunlight and air and moisture whether that be from any rainfall or watering.
 - ◆ That compost or soil you spread is going to also benefit your existing grass needless to say, too. They'll both get fed those extra nutrients from the soil or compost.

- ✓ Alternately, if you plan to spread some additional topsoil or compost, you could apply the compost first, spreading it lightly all over the existing lawn and then spread your seed on top of it thereafter.
 - ◆ This would ensure you don't bury your new seeds too deeply.
 - ◆ After seeding though, lightly rake the seeds so the compost lightly covers the seed and keeps it in place.
 - ◆ In that sense, there's perhaps a little more work involved with this alternate approach.

NOTE: Be sure you DO NOT mow your lawn again until that new seed has germinated and reached at least 2 to 2½ inches in height. It may take 3 to 4 weeks, depending on the seed type.

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If you mow before the seed germinates, (because your existing grass is getting quite long) you run the risk of picking up loose seed along with that, or moving it around, bunching it up in places by your lawnmower's wheels or foot traffic. Remember, contact with the soil and moisture is most important and you want your new seeds to be making uniform contact throughout your lawn. So be patient and wait a bit longer and then mow when those seeds have germinated and matured a bit more. [MORE ABOUT THIS LATER]

6th – Choose The Right Grass Seed –

The results of overseeding a lawn can be quite dramatic. Depending upon conditions, within just a week or two, you should start to see the new grass seed germinate and grow. It should fill-in any thin areas quite nicely and as it matures your lawn should have that thicker lush uniformity and look far better!

- ✓ You'll need to know what type of grass you have before you choose the seeds for overseeding.
 - ◆ You want to choose a seed that is compatible with your existing grass, and normally the same as your grass.
 - ◆ If not, it may look a little different in colour and in the grass blades themselves, too.
 - ◆ If you're overseeding the entire lawn you're not apt to notice any real difference once it grows out and matures.
 - ◆ For example, if you have turf-type tall fescue, then use turf-type tall fescue seed or a blend of turf-type tall fescue seed and Kentucky bluegrass seed.
 - ◆ Be careful about using bargain store seed brands for overseeding lawns. Bargain seed is often poor quality seed and may contain multiple undesirable varieties, and you may get some poor results.

- ✓ 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.
 - ◆ As we mentioned earlier, our grass seed types for our region are typical cool season varieties such as turf-type tall fescue, or Kentucky bluegrass with fine fescue.

Can You Mix Different Types of Grass Seed?

- ✓ Yes. Mixing different grasses can actually be better than planting only one grass type.
 - ◆ 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 to fill-in thin or bare spots and repair damage. They compensate for each other's weaknesses.

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

- ✓ Course Fescue Rule: If you have a turf-type tall fescue lawn, do not overseed with a coarse type tall fescue seed. 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 color 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. Overseeding lawns using only fine fescue seed is not recommended, but it may be okay when combined with other seed varieties.
- ✓ 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 home lawns.

How Much Seed To Apply?

Firstly, be aware that it is possible when overseeding 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 thickness of your lawn. If you currently overseed every year, less seed would be needed. 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 footprint, so to speak. Applying so much seed in an attempt 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.

General Guidelines:

- ✓ Use 6 to 8 lbs of tall fescue, or 2 to 4 lbs of fine fescue, or 1 to 2 lbs of Kentucky bluegrass, per 1000 sq. ft. if your lawns are being overseeded as more of a annual maintenance activity for thicker lawns.
- ✓ When overseeding lawns with some barren dirt areas and other thinned-grass trouble spots, use 4 to 8 lbs per 1000 sq. ft.
- ✓ For complete renovation of a very poor quality/very thin lawn, 8 to 12 lbs per 1000 sq. ft. may be needed.
- ✓ Golf courses often use 15 to 30 lbs of seed when overseeding important areas. Why? Because they have an extremely high user expectation. They don't have the luxury of "*allowing it to grow in over time.*" Golf course lawns are NOT at ALL like residential lawns. They know how much of a particular seed the turf can handle. Home-owners should NEVER try to follow their example or you may create problems for yourself.

- ✓ Be careful/fair warning – Some websites and some self-proclaimed experts will recommend doubling or tripling the recommended rates. It's true that not every seed is going to germinate properly... Some even say when overseeding an established lawn that you should use double the rate of seed recommended for planting a brand new lawn from scratch. This is bad advice. They may be assuming that the homeowner is not going to water correctly. The problem is if they do water correctly and get good germination, they can easily end up with far too much over-crowded grass, and that will lead to its own problems. Even if you use triple the rate, but fail to water properly, you can still lose the lawn. It takes some good effort for overseeding lawns correctly, so be determined to pay careful attention to how you water. You can always measure out more seed if you really believe you need it.
- ✓ Make sure you follow good watering techniques for the best results.
- ✓ And please remember... There are no magical *“do this once and you'll thereafter have a perfect lawn”* solutions... It may take a couple of years, overseeding each year, for the lawn to look its best, assuming you are also employing other routine lawn care maintenance practices.

7th – Spreading The Grass Seed –

REMEMBER: As mentioned earlier, combining core aeration with overseeding is also beneficial because it will ensure the seeds get down into the soil, as some will surely fall into the core holes.

You can overseed small areas or you can overseed your entire lawn. You want to be sure to sprinkle the seed onto the grass evenly. You may carefully apply a wee bit more in patchy or thinner areas, but don't overdo it.

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, overseeding lawns doesn't require expensive equipment.

✓ **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.

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- 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, try to spread the seed when the air is calm.
 - Overseeding lawns 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 lawn of around 1500 sq ft or less, that you’re overseeding, 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.
- Or if you’re only covering a very small area or some small thin spots or near-barren patches, you can easily spread the seed by hand trying to do it as evenly as possible.

8th – Fertilizing the New Grass –

At Scotts 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... 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, please 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 planning to first overseed your existing lawn or seeding a brand new lawn, you need to forego, for the time being, any herbicide treatments. 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 overseeding, 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, overseeded 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 before or immediately after doing any overseeding.

✓ **Applying a starter fertilizer:**

So the question is... Do I overseed or do I need to fertilize my existing lawn first? And will it help to do so?

Yes, it surely can help to get a quick-release starter fertilizer specially formulated for newly seeded grass.

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Ideally, you want NPK ratios that will contain higher amounts of the phosphorus component (the middle number in the NPK ratio on the bag of fertilizer), which supports vigorous root growth. Alternately, if you're already partaking of our Fertilizer & Weed Control spray program, be sure to wait a week or so and then do your overseeding. Starter fertilizer or our fertilizer within our spray regimen will not only give your existing lawn the quick boost it needs in preparation for overseeding but the additional nutrients will help the new grass seed germinate, establish stronger roots, and fill out more quickly.

If you're doing it on your own, there are special pre-seed fertilizers available at Garden centres that can get your new grass seed off to the best possible start. Using the fertilizer spreader once again, spread a lawn starter fertilizer anywhere you're planning to or have already added new seed.

However, be mindful that to avoid any potential grass blade scorching or burning, with your existing 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. 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. It does wonders with old worn out fatigued lawns that need a make-over, to say the least.

9th – Watering the New Grass –

✓ **Keep the New Seedlings Moist:**

After overseeding your lawn, the seeds will need moisture to germinate.

- Afterward, no matter which product you used to overseed, be sure to keep the soil consistently moist (but not overly wet) by lightly watering once or twice a day during the first week.
- Water more heavily every other day for the next five days, until the seedlings have reached the height of the rest of your lawn.
 - This should encourage deep, healthy roots.
 - Assuming optimal growing conditions and good weather, this typically takes about four weeks on average to get to the height of your existing grass.
- Always water in the morning, before 10 a.m., to keep the water from evaporating in the sun's heat.
- Watch for signs of overwatering, such as puddles or spongy soil.
 - You're not trying to drown your seeds.
 - If you notice these signs, 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 light bit of compost or soil to hold in place.
 - Heavy rainfalls tend to scatter your seeds everywhere or bunch them up and thereby negates what you did in spreading them evenly.
 - So check after a rainfall if you've just overseeded and then it rained.
- Once your grass begins sprouting, you can cut down 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.

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- As the grass grows, allow the soil to dry slightly before watering again.
 - The greatest danger to seedlings is overwatering and soaking the soil, which could lead to fungal disease problems or... underwatering and drying out the tiny roots.
 - The second greatest problem is if you have excessively hot and very dry periods that cook the tender roots should the ground get too dry.

10th – 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.
- Wait to mow the lawn until the new grass reaches the same height as the established grass.
- Pay extra attention to the first mow after overseeding; just remember that your lawn is still getting established and needs a little extra care.
 - Your existing lawn that your new seedlings are in the midst of, may be able to handle shorter mowing but give the new seedlings time to catch their stride, so to speak...especially if you're experiencing hot and dry conditions.
 - After your new seedlings have blended in with your new lawn to the point that you can't even tell they're there and about the same height, you can revert back to your normal mowing height and lawn care routine for that time of the year.

We trust this primer on Overseeding For Existing Lawns has been a help. As mentioned previously, overseeding is not difficult to do nor expensive for you to do, yourself. We believe in not only just offering you excellent products and services, but also... in educating you, too... enabling you to create a lawn that's the envy of your neighbours.

Of course, if you have any questions or need any further advice, don't hesitate to call us. We're always here for our clients!

***** 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.

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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

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

...See more on next page...

"Your Home Turf Advantage"

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

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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