

DORMANT SEEDING TURFGRASSES

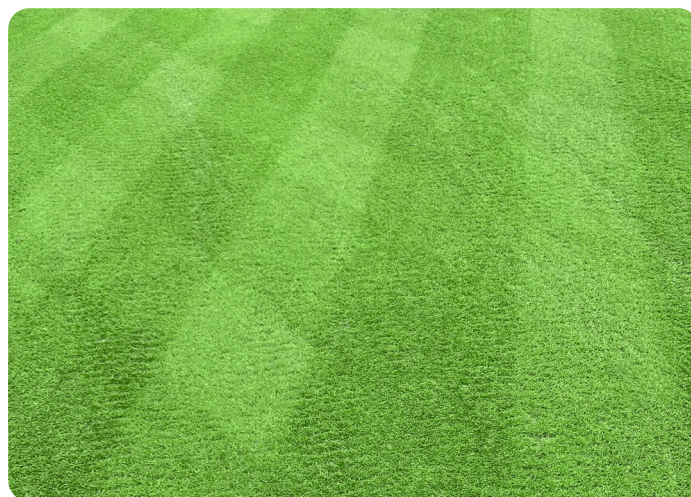
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The typical seeding window for permanent cool-season grasses closes between September 15 to October 1 in many areas of the world. This does not mean you need to give up on improving your lawn, golf course or sports field until next spring. Dormant seeding planted November through March can fix areas, help change genetics or have seed in place in areas with previous damage from drought, cold or other abiotic stress. It can also be helpful in areas with wet spring soils that make planting difficult.

Dormant seeding makes sense anytime you are out of the optimal period for not only germination but establishment. Planting creeping bentgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue, perennial ryegrass and most fine fescues once the temperatures drop below 50 degrees would be considered dormant seeding. Prepare the seedbed as you would for regular seeding and make sure you have good seed to soil contact. The cold temperatures will keep the seed from germinating until spring when they emerge much sooner than if planted in the spring. The weather conditions and moisture in winter act like seed priming to enable quick, early germination. The best month depends on your location. Use a higher seeding rate to compensate for any loss.

Correct any problems with your site before seeding. Sometimes you need to examine the site to see why the turfgrass failed in the first place. Maybe it is problems with the irrigation system, soil issues, tree root competition, too much shade or wet spots. Try to correct these problems before any seeding is done. Think about how much maintenance you want to do and the look you want to have. Tall Fescue / Kentucky bluegrass blends do well for high or low maintenance. Fine fescue blends are excellent for sun or shade low maintenance and can be used for reduced mowing or a meadow type look. Kentucky bluegrasses are



often considered the highest quality lawn in northern areas. Perennial ryegrasses are added to many blends for quick establishment and dark green color but make sure any blend has ryegrass cultivars with Gray Leaf Spot resistance.

Wait for spring. Seed should be germinating just as the soil starts warming. If its dry you may need to irrigate to improve establishment. If you have a good stand you may not need preemergent herbicides or can use them now. If you need to thicken the stand wait and use post-emergent herbicides for early weeds. Stronger plants from the winter planting leads to better summer survival.

- **Missed Fall Planting window (seed planted before Sept. 15 to Oct. 1)**
- **Wait until soil temperatures are below 50 degrees F (10 degrees C)**
- **Prepare Seedbed (correct site problems)**
- **Seed with seeder or broadcast – Seed to soil contact important**
- **Use higher seeding rate**
- **Irrigate if dry so the new seedlings become established**
- **Evaluate your stand before adding seed or using herbicides in Spring**