

# Late-Season SEEDING

TECHNICAL BULLETIN

## Thin or thatchy lawn? Consider late-season seeding.



*A very effective seeding system uses a slice-seeder (above) to cut through the thatch and create furrows in the soil. Tubes drop seed into the furrows for great seed-to-soil contact and improved germination.*

### **Do you need to seed?**

Late summer is the time to decide what, if any, seeding work your lawn will need this year. Careful advance planning and follow-up can make the difference between seeding success and failure.

**Thin lawns.** Can you see the soil or thatch layer when you look down at the grass? Thinness allows weeds to get started in the lawn and causes the lawn to dry out much faster. A thin lawn should be seeded.

**Heavy thatch.** The thatch layer can become so heavy that the primary root system is growing more in the thatch than in the soil below. Shallow, thatch-rooted lawns are much more susceptible to drought damage.

**Better turf variety.** Do you want to develop a more disease-, insect- or drought-tolerant lawn? There are grass varieties that bugs, diseases and hot weather don't bother as much as others.

These are a few of the conditions that call for seeding work. Others include repairing lawn drainage problems and fixing worn or rutted areas.

Many of our customers don't understand why late summer and fall are usually the best times to plant grass seed, but if you consider the following reasons, you'll see the sense it makes.

### **Points to remember about late-season seeding**

- Use high-quality, certified seed to avoid planting weeds.
- Plant early enough to take advantage of higher soil temperatures that speed germination.
- Water and fertilize to promote rapid establishment. Ideally, the new turf should be mowed three to five times during the fall in which it's seeded.
- Avoid weed controls of any kind until the new turf has been mowed about five times. Some weeds will appear, but they can easily be controlled later.
- It takes a couple of years to fully establish a lawn. Give your new planting extra care through the whole first season.

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*The lawn above was totally renovated by first spraying the existing damaged turf to eliminate it, and then slice-seeding with a more insect-tolerant variety. The new lawn below is shown several months later.*



#### **Why late-season seeding is best**

- Seed planted late in the season has two good growing periods (fall and spring) to “harden off” before going through the drought and heat stress often associated with summer weather.
- In the fall, most fast-growing weeds like crabgrass won’t be sprouting and choking out the slower-growing permanent grass being planted.
- Soil temperatures are higher in late summer, which means faster germination and establishment of most grasses.
- Late-summer seeding need not disrupt the proper timing of weed control as spring seeding almost always does (new grass shouldn’t be treated for broadleaf weeds until after the fourth or fifth mowing).

#### **What is the best way to plant seed?**

There are many ways to plant grass seed, and there are lawn conditions that call for each. We’ll be happy to advise you on which is best for your lawn’s needs.

With *overseeding*, the seed is broadcast evenly over the lawn and is washed into the soil where it lodges and sprouts. This method is simple and economical. Next is *aeration plus overseeding*. The big advantage here is that aeration opens the soil and provides a better germinating area by improving seed-to-soil contact. For badly damaged or very thin and thatchy lawns, *slice-seeding* (also known as *verti-cut seeding*) is an excellent way to get your lawn back on the road to health and beauty. Slice-seeding actually plants the seed into the soil while helping to destroy thatch. This is accomplished with slicing blades that cut through thatch and create furrows in the soil. Small tubes drop the seed into these furrows, and rollers close the soil back over the seed.

#### **After the seed is planted...**

The care you give a new lawn during the first year is very important.

- Water, water, water. Frequent, light sprinklings until seed sprouts, then longer and deeper soakings. You really can’t water too much.
- When the grass reaches mowing height, go ahead and mow.
- Avoid weed controls, and be sure that the new lawn has a steady supply of fertilizer to speed up establishment.

