



If your turf is looking a little worse for wear, you aren't alone. There is still hope for a lush, green lawn this year. Just a few simple steps will help to get a lawn that will make the neighbors jealous.

The type of turfgrass in the lawn and the extent of the damage will make a difference in its management. Moderately thinned Kentucky bluegrass lawns will have smaller than softball-sized thinned 'holes,' while tall fescue lawns would be smaller than baseball sized holes. Aggressive fall fertilization and broadleaf weed control should improve moderately thinned lawns. For lawns that have larger areas of thinning turf, aerification and possibly power raking followed by overseeding will help to reestablish the turf in those thinned areas. Fall fertilization and weed control is also a good idea for further improvement. Lawns that are severely damaged or have had issues for quite some time, can be started over with a complete renovation. A complete renovation can include regrading of the site, tilling, or possibly incorporating organic matter followed by reseeding.

Overseeding a lawn will help to fill in the empty spots and create a full lawn yet this fall. Overseeding with a blend of different cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue can give you increased disease resistance, especially if you have an older cultivar. The blend allows some of the cultivars to thrive while others may be more susceptible to turf diseases. This prevents the 'putting all your eggs into one basket' approach. The optimal window to seed cool-season turfgrasses is August 15 to September 15. The rule of thumb is that for each week grasses are seeded before Labor Day, development is speeded up by two weeks. Thin stands of Kentucky bluegrass should be overseeded with improved cultivars at .75 to 1 pound of seed per 1,000 square foot. If you are overseeding a tall fescue lawn, use a blend of improved turf-type tall fescue cultivars at a rate of 4 to 6 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet. Ensure the seed has good seed to soil contact. If you have issues with compaction, consider core aeration. While you are at it, take advantage of the holes caused by core aeration and overseed at the same time. The seeds that fall into the aeration holes are in the perfect environment to start sprouting and growing.

Water is one of the most important elements when it comes to successfully overseeding turfgrasses. Enough water needs to be applied to keep the soil and the seed moist. It depends on the soil and the weather conditions, but irrigation might need to be applied several times a day to make sure the turfgrass seeds get off to a good start. Once the seed has germinated, your watering job isn't over yet. Those newly sprouted seedlings will also need regular watering until they reach a similar size of the established turfgrass.

Fall fertilization helps encourage new growth in cool season turfgrasses. New vegetative growth, like tillers, rhizomes, and stolons, will help fill in those thin areas left behind by disease or summer stress and increase density of the turf. Root production and 'food' stored in the plant's crown is also encouraged by fall fertilization. A turfgrass that has ample stored food reserves will be better able to survive winters' stresses.

The best time to apply fall fertilizer is around the middle of September. For Kentucky bluegrass lawns, try to apply between 1.5 to 2 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. For tall fescue lawns, apply 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. A slow-release fertilizer is recommended for both turfgrasses. This will feed the lawn slowly through the rest of the growing season and will keep you from having one single flush of growth all at once.

With a little seed, water, and some time, your lawn will grow from a disaster to picture perfect in no time.

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