

Windows of opportunity exist in all aspects of life. Taking advantage of them usually determines the difference between success and failure. In horticulture, many windows of opportunity present themselves; however, they generally remain open for a limited period of time. One such window is now wide open.

Kentucky bluegrass, a cool season grass, is the number one choice of turf for our area. Unfortunately many bluegrass lawns have been under attack this summer from disease, insects, the environment and pet or human abuse. Now is the time to undo the ravages of summer's assaults.

If one's turf shows damage, yet fifty percent or more remains in good condition, overseeding is the recommended line of defense. Overseeding is precisely what the word implies: sowing new grass seed over existing turf. As easy as that task may sound, certain steps should be followed to ensure success.

First and foremost, buy quality seed. Certified seed is the best choice. Certification is indicated by a blue tag attached to the seed bag. Although more expensive than other seed, certified seed ensures that it is true to type and weed-free.

Genetic diversity is the best protection against most perils. Sow a mixture of bluegrass cultivars. The newer cultivars are generally hardier and more disease and pest resistant.

Below are listed a few cultivars of blue grass from Iowa State University that are top performers and should do well in Nebraska.

Argyle,	Kenblue,	Touchdown	Limousine,	Midnight,
Kimono	Parade.	Harmony	P104	Park
Ginger	Glade			

Since one will be sowing seed over existing grass, one should minimize the competition. Reduce the height of the grass to about 1.5 inches. This will allow for more sunlight to reach the grass seed.

Grass seed needs to make intimate contact with the soil to germinate effectively. To ensure this, core aerate the existing turf before seeding in two or three directions. The holes created by the aerator provide an excellent foothold for germinating grass seed. For best results, sow one to two pounds of grass seed per one thousand square feet.

Proper watering is essential for the seeds to germinate. Use a light spray rather than flooding. The soil should be kept evenly moist but not soggy. This may mean several waterings per day for several weeks depending on the weather. Bluegrass seed takes approximately twenty one days to germinate. It is crucial that the soil be kept moist and not allowed to dry, especially as the seeds begin to germinate. At this time, the seedlings are most vulnerable and will easily perish if the soil dries. Young seedlings need time to mature and establish a successful root system that becomes fully anchored. Approximately, five weeks after the grass has sprouted, one can apply a quick-release nitrogen fertilizer. Avoid fertilizing if the ground is frozen.

September provides the opportune window to seed or overseed a bluegrass lawn. The warm days and cool nights plus the added bonus of an occasional rain make this the perfect environment for starting cool season grasses. Does that mean this window is only open for one month? An absolute yes or no to that question is not possible. Success is totally dependent on how quickly winter sets in. Newly emerged grass must have adequate time to establish a quality root system before the ground freezes.

While the window of opportunity stands wide open, take advantage. Now is the ideal time to seed or overseed bluegrass.