

Views from VanDeWalle

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August 24, 2020

Fall Lawn Care Reminders

The kids are back in school, and hopefully we'll be able to see high school football and volleyball games – it is officially fall! During this time of year, it is an ideal time to seed the cool season turfgrasses tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass. For all of you horticulture enthusiasts, be sure to follow Nicole Stoner, extension educator focused in horticulture's blog at plantsandpests.wordpress.com or go to Nebraska Extension's Hort Update newsletter at hortupdate.unl.edu.

This week, I took some of the lawn tips from a UNL Hort Update on site preparation for lawn seeding or over seeding. For success, seedbed preparation is important to assure seed to soil contact. For newly planted turf, complete the following steps:

- 1). Remove all construction debris, branches, etc.
- 2). Control perennials weeds with glyphosate (Roundup). Two to three applications at the recommended timing may be needed.
- 3). Establish grade for proper surface drainage.
- 4). Use a rotary tiller or other cultivation equipment to work the soil to a depth of six inches, incorporate compost while tilling. Avoid tillage of wet soil as this creates compaction. Do not try to improve clay soil by tilling in sand as this can increase compaction. For clay soils, spread a one inch layer of compost over the site and till it in. Then spread another one inch layer and till perpendicular to the first tillage.
- 5). Allow soil to settle after tilling and prior to seeding.
- 6). Keep the soil moist after seeding.

To over seed your lawn, complete the following:

- 1). Mow the area 1 to 1.5 inches tall.
- 2). If there is excess thatch, one-half inch thick or more, power rake aggressively and removed debris.
- 3). Aerify the area, punching 20 to 40 holes per sq. ft. with the largest tines available. Make at least two to three passes over the area to be seeded.
- 4). Apply a starter fertilizer.
- 5). Seed using a drop spreader or power overseeder (slit or slicer seeder).
- 6). Keep the soil moist.

Fall is also a great time to fertilize cool season grasses. Elizabeth Killinger, extension educator reminds us that cool season grasses, like Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue, are beginning to wake up from the summer slump and are vigorously growing. Actively growing turf means the perfect time to apply fertilizer applications. Fertilizing in mid-September encourages new vegetative growth, like tillers, rhizomes, and stolons, which help fill in those thin areas left behind by disease or summer stress and increase density of the turf. September fertilization also encourages root production and making of products that will be stored in the plants' crown. A turfgrass that has ample stored 'food' reserves will be better able to survive winters' stresses.

I'd also like to wish the best of luck to all 4-H and FFA youth exhibiting at the State Fair!