

# STRASSER NOTES

## Overseeding Your Lawn

In the Kansas City area it is not uncommon for cool-season lawns to look less than perfect after the stress of a hot summer. Disease, drought, heat, poor soil or just plain old neglect may mean that it's time for a round of overseeding. In fact some people have found that in the Kansas City area cool-season grasses should be treated almost as though they are hardy annuals or delicate perennials. In other words, to keep a lawn looking great it will probably need at least some overseeding each year. The optimum time to seed cool-season turfgrasses in Kansas City is during September. This is when nature establishes cool-season grasses; therefore, the best results with the least amount of work occur at that time. Do not delay seeding or the grass will not establish sufficiently before winter and weeds like henbit and chickweed become a problem. March and April are second choices for seeding but are a distant second at best.

Follow these steps to a denser, healthier lawn each fall:

**Be Careful With The Chemicals.** Do not use crabgrass preventers before seeding or on young grass. These are best used as pre-emergents in the early spring anyway. Do not use broadleaf weed killers one month before seeding or on new grass until it has been mowed three times.

**Prepare the Soil.** Mow the area to 1½ inches to reduce competition from established grasses. Short mowing helps prevent the seed from lodging in tall grass and lets light reach the new seedlings. Use a grass catcher on the mower or sweep up excess clippings. Do not scalp off all the existing turf - some is needed to protect the germinating seed from wind, hot sun, and heavy rain. If your lawn has excess thatch you will need to dethatch before overseeding.

**Use a verticutter/over-seeder.** This machine cuts vertical grooves into your soil creating nice soil to seed contact. It's best to make two or three passes over your lawn at different angles creating a cross-hatch pattern. Each pass of the over-seeder will leave shallow trenches about 1/8 inch wide and ¼ inch deep, dropping the seed in as it goes. The seed should be dropped at ½ the rate per sq ft. of new lawn seeding.

Do not set the over-seeder too deep. Excess depth, over ½ inch will damage existing grass and roots and in general make a mess of your yard.

Apply a slow release nitrogen fertilizer over the lawn and water it in completely. To ensure proper germination you will need to keep the seeds moist. This means watering daily. Light, frequent watering will yield the best results.

Fescues will germinate in approximately 2-3 weeks. Bluegrass takes a little longer, approximately 3-4 weeks.

Mow your new cool-season grass as soon as it is 3 inches tall with the mower set at 2 inches. Continue to mow at that height for the remainder of the season, including the last mowing.

Apply a winterizer fertilizer which will help root growth over the winter. The root system of your new turf continues to grow and strengthen even after the blades have stopped growing for the season. You will be rewarded with a quick thickening, healthy lawn next spring.