

# LAWN PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE

## SEED OR SOD

The choice of seed or sod is one of patience and budget. Sod lawns cost more, but can be used almost immediately. Sod lawns do best in full sun. The preparation of the soil is the same for seed and sod. By choosing one of **Sky Nursery's** seed mixes, you can get a superior lawn tailored to your specific needs. Our mixes are carefully chosen blends of fescues and ryegrasses that perform especially well in our Northwest climate.

<b><u>Showcase</u></b>	Our best all-around mix for a durable, great-looking lawn.
<b><u>Play and Fun</u></b>	Rough and tumble durability.
<b><u>Custom Shade</u></b>	Grows great in sun, but tolerates more shade than others.
<b><u>Overseed</u></b>	Germinates quickly, blends well with existing turf.
<b><u>Water Warden</u></b>	Most drought-tolerant blend. Slow to germinate, all tall fescue.

## PLANTING A NEW LAWN

*(April, May, June, September, October best times)*

Good soil preparation before planting is essential for your lawn's long-term performance. To provide a good foundation for your new lawn, rototill generous amounts (2 to 4 inches) of compost into the existing soil. Rake the soil smooth, removing large rocks and debris. Using a water roller, lightly compress the soil. If it's not smooth, rake it again.

Apply, in any order, the following: seed (7 pounds per 1000 square feet), dolomite lime and starter fertilizer (follow the instructions on the bag). Cover this with a thin layer of peat moss (one 3.8 cubic foot bale covers about 450 square feet) or **Gardner & Bloome Soil Building Compost** (follow the instructions on the bag) to hide the seed from birds and create a moist germination layer. Roll again with an empty roller. **Keep moist** for 2-4 weeks.

To plant sod, prepare the soil exactly as above. Apply the fertilizer and lime to the soil **before** you lay down the sod. Be sure to stagger the end joints as you lay the sod out. Roll with an empty roller to ensure good contact. Again, keep the new lawn moist for 2-4 weeks.

Mow the new lawn when it's about 2-3 inches high. (Year-round mowing height should be 2 to 3 inches.) Re-fertilize with a regular lawn food (**not** a weed and feed) in about a month.

## LAWN WATERING

Most of the year, watering your lawn should not be necessary. During dry spells, only 1 to 2 inches of water per week is necessary. If you use a sprinkler, use a wide shallow container to measure the water you're putting on. Remember, long slow soakings once or twice a week are best. If water seems to be running off rather than soaking in, aerating your lawn may help. **E-Z-Wet** or **Perc-o-late** can help water penetrate deeply and then "wick" back up when needed. Setting your mowing height higher can reduce water needs by shading the ground and promoting deeper root growth. Improving your soil with extra compost can also promote deeper root growth and increased drought resistance.

## **LAWN FEEDING**

When choosing lawn food, look for key words like **organic, controlled** (or **slow**) release, or **water-insoluble**. Granular (dry) fertilizers work better and longer than liquid ones. Some studies have indicated that organic fertilizers can help improve your lawn's resistance to the fungus red thread. Fertilization frequency depends on what you want your lawn to look like. A minimum feeding schedule is twice per year (for example, in April and October). Best results are obtained by feeding approximately once each season (for example, Valentine's Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving). **The most important times to feed are fall and early spring (September, late November, & February)**—those feedings support root growth, storing food for spring growth. Dolomite lime should be applied in early spring (around Valentine's Day), at a rate of about 2-4 pounds per 100 square feet. Fertilizer should never be applied to dry lawns and should always be thoroughly watered in. Apply at the rate recommended on the bag.

## **RESEEDING**

*(April, May, June, September, October best times)*

Before reseeding, thatch if necessary and aerate any hard compacted areas with a device that removes plugs of dirt. Mow the lawn about 30% shorter than normal. Fill in low spots with **Sky's Premium Planting Mix**; if the depth of the fill is more than 2 inches, roll with a partially filled water roller to compact the soil. Apply seed, dolomite lime, and starter fertilizer, cover with peat moss or **Gardner & Bloome Soil Building Compost**, and thoroughly water. Treat the reseeded areas like a new lawn: keep moist for 2-4 weeks, fertilize again in about a month, and wait to mow until it's 2 inches high.

## **GRASS CLIPPINGS**

Since grass clippings are about **90% water and 9% fertilizer**, leaving them on the lawn to decompose (grass-cycling) is beneficial- **if** you do the following:

1. Mow frequently enough to cut at most 1 inch on each mowing.
2. Cut only when grass is dry (wet grass forms clumps on your lawn).
3. Keep mower blades sharp so clippings are cut as small as possible.
4. If you're using a rotary mower, use a mulching blade.

## **THATCHING**

*(Any time ground is not frozen or bone-dry)*

Over time some lawns develop a layer of old roots and grass stems between the grass and the soil surface called "thatch". If this layer becomes too thick ( $\frac{3}{4}$ " or more), water, air, and fertilizer cannot reach the grass roots and the lawn begins to thin out, especially in the summer. Keeping your grass mowed to a uniform height (2" to 3") year round and using an organic fertilizer such as **Whitney Farms** or **Dr. Earth** can help prevent thatch from accumulating. The grass blades themselves do not normally contribute to thatch because they are 99% water and fertilizer. If you mow without a grass catcher, mow more frequently so that the cut blades are smaller, and keep your mower sharp.

If you do have a problem layer of thatch, remove it with a thatching rake or a power thatcher. For heavy buildups, cross-raking will be necessary. The lawn will look thin and sparse, but it will quickly generate new growth. Then follow the directions for **RESEEDING**.