

TEXAS TURF TIPS

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Can Problems Occur as a Result of Overseeding?

Each year, many golf courses, sports fields and home/commercial lawns are overseeded in the fall with a cool season turf such as annual or perennial ryegrass. Some are overseeded to prevent substantial damage to their existing dormant warm season turfgrass from excessive traffic, while others do it for winter color and aesthetic purposes. Whatever the reason, one must realize that this practice has both pros and cons.

Overseeding is recommended for sites that have relatively high levels of traffic during the winter months, such as a golf course or sports field. It does prevent excessive damage to the dormant warm season turf. However, the cool season grass does compete with the existing warm season turf (i.e. Bermudagrass) during the spring months. During this period, the cool season grass is growing vigorously while the warm season grass is just beginning to come out of winter dormancy. This period of time when competition between grasses is occurring is called 'spring transition'.

Spring transition has caused severe damage to warm season turfgrasses on many sites throughout Texas. Turfgrass sites may become weakened and thinned such that overall quality of the affected site declines. In most cases, sites overseeded with perennial ryegrass receive much higher levels of spring transition problems than those overseeded with annual ryegrass. This doesn't mean that perennial ryegrass should not be used, just that one needs to realize that this variety usually survives much longer into the early summer months compared to the annual ryegrass.

There are herbicides available that can be used on overseeded bermudagrass sites to take out the cool season grass. These include: Revolver, Monument, TransXit, Manor and Kerb. Remember, most of these are only labeled for golf courses and sports fields. In addition, read the label carefully so as not to harm your existing warm season grass.

Again, overseeding does have some positive attributes. But, one must consider what happens in the spring and how it may negatively affect your turfgrass.

For more information on the pros and cons for overseeding, go to the Aggie-Turf web site at <http://aggie-turf.tamu.edu> and click on "Turf Tips".

Selecting Warm Season Turfgrasses for Home Lawns in Texas!

Are you going to install a new lawn this year? Have you decided which turfgrass variety you are going to use? Selecting the proper lawn grass is extremely important in order to avoid problems in the future on your site. In Texas, the warm season grass species that are most often used include St. Augustinegrass, bermudagrass (common or hybrid), zoysiagrass (coarse or fine leaf textured), buffalograss, centipedegrass and seashore paspalum.

It is important to understand that each turfgrass species, as well as varieties within species, have weaknesses. For example, all the lawn grasses will do well in full sun, but only a select few perform well in the shade (i.e. St. Augustinegrass-excellent shade tolerance; zoysiagrass-moderate shade tolerance). Others have a higher level of drought tolerance (i.e. buffalograss) while others have excellent salt tolerance (i.e. seashore paspalum). Maintenance practices such as mowing height, mowing frequency, fertilization, and irrigation can differ among the turfgrasses as well. It is up to you to do your homework and select the correct lawn grass for your site. Making the proper selection will pay dividends for you in the end!!

For more information on warm season turfgrasses for Texas, go to the Aggie-Turf web site at <http://aggie-turf.tamu.edu> and click on “Answers 4 You”, then “Selection”.

Lawn Fertilization for Spring!

Spring is in the air!! Warmer temperatures means that the soil will soon warm to a level that our warm season turfgrasses (i.e. St. Augustinegrass, bermudagrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass, centipedegrass, and seashore paspalum) will begin to grow. This also means that one needs to plan their nutrient management program for the year. Taking a soil sample is a good first step in this process. It will provide useful information pertaining to the level of nutrients in your soil and can assist you in developing your yearlong environmentally sensitive approach to nutrient management.

In the spring, it is recommended to apply your first fertilizer application after your lawn has begun to grow. You may want to wait until after you have mowed your lawn 2 to 3 times. Applying fertilizer too early can cause undue stress to your turf if a late freeze occurs. Also, apply fertilizer in measured amounts to your lawn. This means you need to know the surface area (square feet) of your site and how much of a nutrient your particular turfgrass requires in a given application and in a given year. Remember, not all turfgrasses require the same level of fertility (i.e. nitrogen) in a year-long program.

For more detailed information on “Lawn Fertilization”, go to the Aggie-Turf web site at <http://aggie-turf.tamu.edu> and click on “Turf Tips”.

Irrigation Audits—A Method to Evaluate Your Irrigation System!

Have you ever wondered if your irrigation system is placing water evenly throughout your landscape? Do you have areas in your turf that seem to remain rather dry compared to other sites in your lawn? Do you have any idea how many inches of water is applied when you irrigate for an hour? One method used to answer all of these questions is an “irrigation audit”.

An irrigation audit is used to evaluate the performance of your irrigation system. By performing an audit, one can obtain an application rate (inches of water per hour) as well as the distribution uniformity of your system. It is a rather simple task to perform. Just take several catch cans (i.e. tuna fish cans, cat food cans, dog food cans, etc..) and place them in one of your zoned areas. Place a catch can two feet from each irrigation head and one between irrigation heads. Turn on that irrigation zone for 15 or 30 minutes and measure the amount of water (inches) captured in the cans with a measuring tape or ruler. Record the values and obtain an average for all the can measurements. For example, if your average is ¼ inch for 15 minutes, you would then have an application rate of 1 inch per hour for that zone. By drawing a diagram of your zone, you can also record the values for each head and see just how uniform the water is being applied to your lawn. Do this for each zone to evaluate your entire irrigation system. Make the needed adjustments to your system so that you can have an efficient and effective irrigation system.

For more detailed information on “Water Management for Turfgrass” and “Irrigation Audits”, go to the Aggie-Turf web site at <http://aggie-turf.tamu.edu> and click on “Turf Tips”.