

It's Overseeding Time

Overseeding of bermuda grass is necessary in order to maintain a green lawn throughout the year in the deserts of Arizona. Bermuda naturally goes dormant and turns brown in or around late November after our first frosts of the winter. Ryegrass is the grass of choice for overseeding Bermuda. Both Annual and Perennial rye grass are available. While both are acceptable, perennial rye will provide a more aesthetically pleasing lawn with a darker green color than that of annual rye.

In preparation for overseeding, Bermuda should not be heavily fertilized after August 15, since nitrogen will favor more growth and less food storage. Excess fertilization of Bermuda in late August can make the Bermuda more competitive than ryegrass and will result in poor winter growth of the ryegrass. Dethatching (removal of dead and dying grass) of the Bermuda should also be completed at least 2 months prior to overseeding.

In Phoenix, overseeding is typically done around the first of October when temperatures are more moderate. This allows for slower bermuda growth and quick germination of the rye seed.

Follow the steps below for successful overseeding of your bermuda lawns.

1. Approximately 3-4 days prior to overseeding, turn off the irrigation to the grass. This encourages premature dormancy of the bermuda which in turn helps rye growth.
2. Scalp (mow) the bermuda to about $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch in height. This allows for rye seed to soil contact and plenty of sun light for the germinating seed. Remove the clippings.
3. Sow the rye grass seed using a rotary spreader at the rate of 8-12 pounds of seed per 1000 square feet. For best results, apply $\frac{1}{2}$ of the seed in 2 different directions for uniform coverage. At the same time as seeding, fertilize with a high phosphorus fertilizer such as 6-20-20 to encourage root growth of the rye grass following the label on the bag.
4. Composted steer manure can be used as a top-dress to help with seed germination. While not necessary, it does help to keep the seed moist and to reduce loss of seed due to birds. Be sure to use only a light top dressing as too much can cause damage to new grass seedlings.
5. Set up automatic irrigation systems to irrigate 3-4 time daily for the first 2 weeks. It is necessary to keep the seed moist but not over water to the point that water puddles. Depending upon the type of sprinklers, typical run times should be about 4-5 minutes. Start time should be approximately 8:00 am, 11:00 am, 2:00 pm and 5:00 pm. Adjust as necessary to prevent drying and puddling of water.
6. Once the seed has germinated, reduce the irrigation run times gradually. As a rule of thumb, decrease one start time for each week after germination until the grass is irrigated once per day. Daytime temperatures will also determine irrigation needs.
7. Complete the first mowing when the grass reaches a height of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Maintain mowing heights from 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches to 2 inches for best results
8. Begin nitrogen based fertilizer applications after the first mowing following labeled instructions on the bag. A good typical fertilizer to use would be 16-20-20. Subsequent nitrogen based fertilizers should be applied every 3-4 weeks until the end of November and will help to maintain a green color through winter.

Trees

FOUR PEAKS ARBOR DIVISION:

It looks like summer is finally coming to an end and it seems monsoon season never even showed up.

The fall and into to the winter is a great time to start trimming trees. With the cooler weather and winter rains the trees will really start to put on some heavy growth. It's a great time to get up in the canopies and get them thinned out before the late winter storms hit. With the warming of the waters in the eastern part of the Pacific Ocean called the El Nino, the weather service is predicting above normal rain fall for December 2009 through February 2010. These winter storms can also have winds as strong as our monsoon storms.

Here are just a few of the species I would recommend having trimmed during the winter months:

Acacia Shoestring & Acacia Willow
Chinese Elm
Ash
Oak
Chinese Pistache
Cotton Wood
Eucalyptus
Mesquite
Palo Brea & Palo Verde
Sissoo

If you have any tree issues, none too small or too large. Give Gary a call or send him an email and he will set up an appointment with you for a free consultation.

Gary McCunn

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