

SEEDING TURFGRASS AT NON-OPTIMAL TIMES OF THE YEAR

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The optimum time for seeding cool-season turfgrasses is mid-August through early September. Turfgrass seeded at this time will develop a dense stand and will usually withstand the stress of winter in the Midwest. However, construction schedules often require seeding in late fall, winter, or spring. At Purdue, we seeded Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, or tall fescue on 1 Sept., 1 Oct., 1 Nov., 1 Dec., 1 Mar., 1 Apr., and 1 May. As expected, we found the September seeding date produced the best establishment, regardless of species. Dormant-seeding Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue in November, December, or March quickened the establishment time compared to seeding in April or May. Dormant-seeding perennial ryegrass in November, December or March may not be justified because of winterkill potential. When seeding at less-than-optimal times, increased inputs such as irrigation and pest control will be needed to insure success. In particular, annual grass control is important for success. We have limited herbicides available that can be used in new seedlings so cultural practices must be optimized to minimize weed pressure. Improving establishment through good seedbed preparation, species selection, and use of starter fertilizer is needed. After germination, proper mowing, fertilization, and irrigation must be practiced. The most viable crabgrass control options include Tupersan (siduron), Drive (quinclorac), and Dimension (dithiopyr) applied prior to seeding and/or shortly after emergence. Our research at Purdue has shown that both Drive and Dimension hold tremendous promise for annual grass control in seedling turf with little risk of damage.