

How Do You Do...?

The Question -- How Do You Pre-germinate Your Seed?

Answered by Steve Wightman, San Diego's Jack Murphy Stadium

We actually don't do a lot of pre-germinating. What we do instead is go out on Friday or Saturday before a home game and put out about 100 lbs. of seed with the broadcast spreader and just let the players work it in. Then, on Monday, after the game, we'll go in and pin spike it, topdress and irrigate. That way, we've almost always got seed germinating.

Once or twice a year though we'll do "seed priming," which is softening up the outside shell. This allows a gain of about 3 or 4 days on germination. For this we use 33 gallon plastic trash containers (about 15 of them) with holes in the sides towards the bottom, and removable plugs. We open a 50 lb. bag of seed, pour it in a container and fill it with water. We drain and replace the water twice a day -- once in the morning and once before we leave. We'll do this for about 3 days and then spread the seed out on the floor of the garage. We then add our sand and organic topdressing mix, put it on the field with our topdressing machine (we also use a broadcast spreader), pin spike it, irrigate and then cover with a vented cover.

Answered by Mike Andresen, Iowa State University

We put a 50 lb. bag of seed in a 50 gallon barrel, fill it with water and cover with plastic. I like to use nylon bags for this purpose. We also add a seaweed extract or Milorganite to the barrel. Remove the plastic daily and change the water, checking periodically to insure the water is not getting too hot. Do this for 4 days.

Now it's time to dump the water out of the barrel, remove the seed and let the water drain out of the bag. If there's time for healing before the next game, I'll aerify the area to be seeded. We then spread, by hand, the seed into the worn areas, apply a starter fertilizer and a fungicide. Then we use an overseeder/verticutter to cut in the seed. This is an important step because it establishes the seed-to-soil contact and breaks up the aeration plugs. We then lightly rake up the debris from the verticutter and remove, roll the newly seeded area with a medium weight roller, and hand water the entire seeded area.

Answered by Murray Cook, Walt Disney World Sports

I feel that pre-germination is really a three-step process. The first step is to determine whether or not you have a real need to pre-germinate. Here in Florida, we don't really have the need unless we have a special event and we need grass in 3 or 4 days. However, if you find you do have the need, move on to step two. Contact your local agricultural extension service, or your own seed company representative, and get a list of the best quick germination grasses for

your region. Once you have that list you can pick out the ones that you feel are best suited to your individual needs.

Step three is the actual pre-germination process. I feel that this is best accomplished by putting your seed in water in 55 gallon trash containers with holes drilled in the bottom for drainage. Change your water every day for 3 days. On the third day, take out your seed and put it on the pavement to dry, then put it in your spreader and get it out on the field at the specified rate.

Answered by Bob Buono, Marriott School Services, Ridgewood, NJ

I use a 60 gallon green landscape barrel for my pre-germination. We'll fill it 30-50% with water, depending on how much seed we're using. We then add the seed, RootsTM and sometimes, a small amount of liquid fertilizer. This will sit in the barrel for 2-3 days until the seed coating starts to break away. Once that's accomplished, we load the barrel onto our utility cart and go out on the field. We just scoop the seed out with a shovel, put it on the bare spots and rake it in with a leaf rake. Finally, we overlay the seed with peat moss and a starter fertilizer. This has been very successful on our football field.

Answered by Mark Schimming, Wichita Baseball

One method we use is to take a bag of rye seed, stick it inside one of our freezers at the stadium for two weeks and literally freeze the seed. We then mix it with Milorganite which acts as a carrier, as well as a starter for the seed. We put the mix directly into the overseeder or spreader and apply at a rate of 8-10 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. We then apply a good starter fertilizer and water lightly for 10-15 minutes three times a day. We start to see germination in 3-4 days.

We also have the luxury of having an old whirlpool tank for our seed. We take a 50 lb. bag of seed in a breathable bag and put the whole bag into the tank which has 5-0-0 fertilizer in with the water. We mix it in at a low rate and turn the jets on in the whirlpool to keep the water moving through the seed. The water gets changed every 12 hours. To gauge when the seed is ready, we take a clear glass jar, put a moist paper towel on the bottom along with a few seeds from the mix. We cover the jar with some plastic with small holes poked in it. Once the seed in the jar starts to germinate, the seed in the tank is ready. We then divide the seed into two or three more breathable bags and put the bags into grocery carts to dry. Once it has dried, we mix the seed with milorganite, put it our overseeder or spreader and away we go! We apply the starter fertilizer and start the light watering, three times a day for 10-15 minutes. With this method, we see germination in about two or three days.

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