

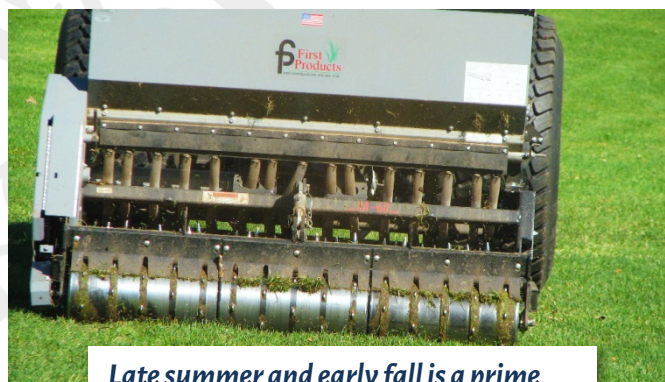


Ready... Set... Seed

By John Daniels, agronomist, Central Region

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As summer winds down, most golf course superintendents that manage cool-season playing surfaces are eagerly awaiting the arrival of milder temperatures. It is the time of year when we transition from maintenance and survival mode to a period of recovery and preparation for next season.



Late summer and early fall is a prime time to overseed cool-season turfgrass.

Over the next month or so, interseeding into thin, weak areas of turf will be an important practice. Follow these important steps to ensure successful turf establishment:

1. *Use high-quality seed* – Choose an appropriate turfgrass species, or combination of turfgrass species, and consult the [National Turfgrass Evaluation Program](#) to determine which cultivars are well adapted to your location.
2. *Prepare the seedbed* – Open up the turf canopy, remove excess thatch and relieve compaction. Aeration will help existing plants as well as improve germination.
3. *Seed at the proper rate* – overseeding rates are generally half the rate of a new establishment: Kentucky bluegrass (1.5 pound per 1,000 square feet), turf-type tall fescue (5 pounds per 1,000 square feet), fine fescue (2 pounds per 1,000 square feet), perennial ryegrass (5 pounds per 1,000 square feet) and creeping bentgrass (0.75 pound per 1,000 square feet).

4. *Sow the seed* – Use a slit seeder, drop seeder, or broadcast seeder in two directions. Dragging with a steel mat or chain can help work the seed down into the canopy so it comes into contact with the soil. Seed-to-soil contact is an absolute necessity for successful seed germination.
5. *Fertilize* – Correct nutrient deficiencies based on a soil test. In lieu of a soil test, apply a well-balanced starter fertilizer at a rate of 1.5 pound of P₂O₅ per 1,000 square feet.
6. *Protect your investment* – Purchase fungicide-treated seed or make a fungicide application to prevent damping-off disease (*Pythium* & *Rhizoctonia spp.*) during periods of unfavorable weather.
7. *Water* – Maintain adequate moisture in the seedbed until germination occurs and monitor seedling growth for symptoms of moisture stress. Remember, a single afternoon of wilt can cause considerable injury to fragile seedlings. Transition to a deeper watering schedule once seedlings develop a stronger root system.

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