



Once creeping bentgrass germinates, three to four months of good growing weather are required before a new putting green can be opened for day-to-day play.

THE TIME TO SEED IS NOW

BY BOB VAVREK | REGIONAL DIRECTOR, CENTRAL REGION

Late summer through early fall is the ideal time to establish cool-season turf species from seed in the northern U.S. Soil temperatures are high enough to encourage rapid seed germination and there are minimal complications from disease activity or weed encroachment. In addition, the threat from frequent thunderstorms that can cause washouts and erosion tends to be greater during spring than fall.

A new green or tee that is seeded by August 15 will generally be ready to open for play around the next season's Memorial Day weekend. Unfortunately, golfers may make a fuss about having to play around renovated surfaces any time before and including the Labor Day weekend. As a result, many golf course projects are postponed until later in September or even into October.

Seed too late and you often trigger a domino effect of unfortunate outcomes. First, the new stand of turf is weak and thin as it enters winter. Moisture stress is a concern because young, shallow-rooted grass can wilt quickly even during cool weather. This is particularly problematic when there is no opportunity

for supplemental watering after the irrigation system is winterized. Finally, who knows what effect frost heaving will have on turf that is not firmly rooted into the soil when dry spring weather occurs before the irrigation system is up and running.

Never count on an early spring to make up for inadequate grow-in time the previous fall. This spring was a prime example of how extended periods of unseasonably cool, wet weather can act as Mother Nature's turf growth retardant. Plus, new turf always looks ready for play well before it is mature enough to accommodate the stress of frequent mowing and daily golf traffic. To further complicate matters, the patience level of golfers who are eager to enjoy new playing surfaces tends to diminish exponentially after the Memorial Day weekend.

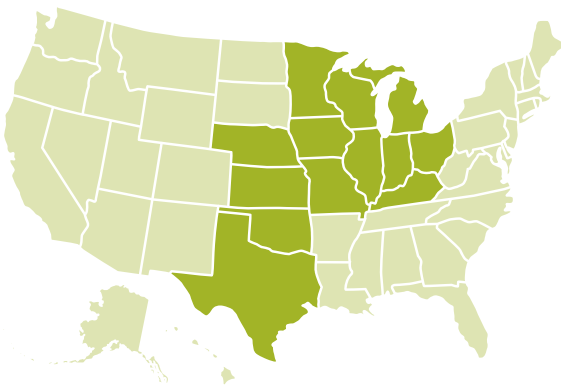


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Don't despair if you plan to seed after the Labor Day weekend, but don't procrastinate either. Fall weather tends to be less fickle than spring weather. You can mitigate the impact of an early frost or chilly nights when you seed late by covering seedlings with a lightweight, breathable germination fabric. Light and breathable are key factors because you never know when a sunny, 85-degree day surprises everyone during October and has you scrambling to remove heavy covers before seedlings cook from the trapped heat. A variety of germination blankets can be found at local garden stores and two similar, inexpensive fabrics successfully used on golf courses are available online through the [A.M. Leonard](#) or [Gempler's](#) horticultural supply catalogues.

As a general rule of thumb, it will take two weeks of good growing weather during the spring to make up for every week that seeding is delayed during the fall. You may have missed the ideal time to seed, but if you act now, you can still take advantage of the best turf growing weather of the year.



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