

# A QUICK GUIDE TO...

## SUCCESSFUL OVERSEEDING

To ensure that you get the most from your overseeding programme there are a number of issues to take on board

### 1. Planning

Make time for your operation. Realistically evaluate what you want to achieve and draw up a schedule of how to get there. Included in this schedule should be comprehensive evaluation throughout the year after application. Part of your research should include that you are buying the correct mixture, species and variety of grasses for your situation.

### 2. Buy the best you can afford

As with all things in life not all grasses are the same, within any species there are different varieties known as cultivars. In trials some cultivars perform better than others when assessed for traits such as wear tolerance, recovery, shoot density etc.

Know the traits that are important to you and research the best cultivars or mixture of cultivars that suit your situation.

You will pay a premium for a mixture of the better performing cultivars, but you wouldn't expect to pay Ford Mondeo prices for a Lamborghini, and the same is true of grass seed.

### 3. Timing

Throw away the general rule of thumb for overseeding, that it is best carried out in early Autumn.

This can work at any time the soil temperature is favourable. If you have a comprehensive, efficient irrigation supply the warmer soil and air temperatures the better. Alternatively, seeding in advance of warm weather or moisture allows utilising quieter times and waiting patiently for germination.

### 4. Application - Ensure good seed soil contact

Having bought a bag of quality grass seed you want to make sure that you get good



germination in order to take advantage of all the desirable traits you have selected it for.

There is no right or wrong way to create the correct environment for germination, seeding into linear grooves, hollow cores or tine holes can all work, the most important thing is to ensure that the seed has good contact with the soil.

In order to germinate a seed has to take in moisture through its permeable outer coating, as the seeds swell a chemical reaction takes place and germination is initiated. It is vital that the seed remains moist throughout this process in order for the process to take place as quickly and as smoothly as possible.

Fluctuation in available moisture can hinder the process and as with all plants, grass seedlings that have a stressful germination are less likely to ever be as healthy as plants that germinate under most favourable conditions.

Seed that is left on the surface risks being dried out and becoming unviable, similarly seed will not germinate well in thatch and seed that does germinate will be weak and won't survive long, because it hasn't rooted into a good growing medium.

### 5. Work to seed at the required depth

It is important that seed is not sown too deeply. A seed only has a small store of energy for the emerging plant to use during the germination period.

The emerging shoot, called a plumule, needs to be able to push through the soil surface and begin the process of

photosynthesis as quickly as possible, to start processing it owns energy and establishing. If a seed is sown too deep then the plumule has a long way to travel to the surface and risks running out of energy before it gets there. Ask your seed rep what depth you should be aiming to sow your chosen mixture at.

### 6. Watering

Assuming adequate soil temperatures and good seed soil contact the seedlings of some species can appear within seven days although generally 14 -21 days is more likely.

During this period irrigation is really the only controllable resource you have. Ideally the surface should be permanently damp and as soon as the surface feels dry and no material particles stick to your hand the surface should be covered with a light sprinkling of water.

### 7. Establishment

When seedlings start to appear and the sward is forming, applications of water should become less frequent and heavier, allowing drying time between applications in order to prevent damping off.

With regards to first cut it is obviously an advantage to raise the height of cut especially for bent grasses, this need not be as drastic as you think and many newer cultivars of bent grass can take a first cut as low as 7-9mm, for ryegrasses on tees 10-12mm is fine.