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Murphy's Law

Dr. James Murphy is an Associate Extension Specialist in Turfgrass Management for Rutgers, department of Plant science. Ask Dr. Murphy your questions: E-mail us at sfmanjchapter@netscape.net

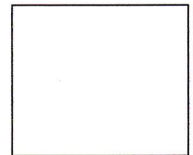
Question: As a kid I heard farmers talk about frost seeding their pastures with the new moon in February. Does frost seeding have practical applications for the athletic field manager?

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What is the concept behind it?

Answer: Frost seeding refers to the practice of sowing seed into the honeycombed surface that develops on soil after repeated freezing and thawing. The goal of this practice is to achieve good seed to soil contact via the seed falling into the soil through the openings in the honeycombed surface of the soil; however the seed will not germinate until the soil temperatures warm considerably. While the intended goal of better seed incorporation is worthy, there are number of other factors that make this practice risky. The seed remains exposed to wind and water erosion as well as bird feeding until the honeycombed structure of the soil surface collapses to cover the seed. Even after the soil honeycomb has collapsed to cover the seed, there is a limited covering of the seed, probably no more than a 1/8-inch of soil. Thus, the un-germinated seed is still rather susceptible to blowing or washing away. It is strongly suggested to delay overseeding until April or May when it is more likely to be successful because the warmer soil temperatures will encourage more rapid emergence of seedlings.

As for the new moon, I can't attest to the veracity of concept that seed germinates better when the moon is waning versus waxing; but that practice is commonly recommended by those practicing organic farming.



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