

It can be beautiful

Prepared by
 Harry A. Graves
 Extension Service Horticulturist
 and
 Donald G. Hoag
 Assistant in Horticulture
 Experiment Station

Case
 5
 544.3
 . N9
 A8
 no 244



NDAC *Extension Service, Fargo*
 NORTH DAKOTA AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

1,
 -
 t
 o
 s
 .
 -
 t
 o
 s
 .
 -
 t
 o
 s
 .

Your lawn..... It can be beautiful

Time spent in preparing your lawn for seeding is time well spent. The amount of effort put forth before seeding will be reflected in the quality of your lawn for several years.

To have a lasting lawn of quality, black topsoil should cover the surface at least 6 inches thick. Carefully establish the grade desired. Smooth the surface with a plank or garden rake. This is the time to fill small depressions and smooth out any irregularities. It will be more difficult to do this after the lawn is established.

Sow seed evenly on a quiet day. Mechanical seeders are usually available for loan from local firms selling lawn seed. Rake in the seed. Roll, if possible. Water thoroughly at once. Water with a hand held nozzle, if convenient. Stand on the walk, drive, or around the edge of the lawn area.

This watering should be vigilant until the lawn is green; usually in 7 to 10 days, if temperatures are 70 degrees or above. Less watering will be necessary if a thin layer of screened, well-rotted manure has been spread on the lawn surface just after seeding. One-half inch screen is the suggested mesh for this manure screen. Bur-lap spread on a newly-seeded lawn will do more harm than good if it isn't removed at just the right time.



Kentucky bluegrass* is the most popular lawn grass for North Dakota lawns. Where it makes up more than half of the lawn grass mixture, it will soon take over and dominate the other grasses. Some prefer to plant Kentucky bluegrass only. Others prefer mixtures where Kentucky bluegrass makes up about 60 percent of the mixture. Still other commercial mixtures are composed of nearly a dozen different kinds of grass. These are usually more expensive than less complex mixtures.

For extremely dry locations, where adequate watering is difficult, a ratio of 2 pounds of Fairway crested wheatgrass to 1 pound of Kentucky bluegrass is suggested. Pay special attention to the kinds of grass in any lawn grass seed mixture you buy. Be suspicious of any lawn grass seed bargains!

RATE OF SEEDING

For most lawn grass seed mixtures, 3 to 5 pounds per 1,000 square feet will be adequate. Care in planting reduces the need for heavier applications.

*The Merion strain of Kentucky bluegrass has not been sufficiently tested in North Dakota to warrant recommendation.

GRIC
RIBUT

ERA

OTA
10, 191

Dry land lawns, where the Fairway crested wheat-bluegrass combination is used, will require at least 3 pounds of the mixture per 1,000 square feet.

For you who prefer White Dutch clover in your lawn, 1 pound of clover to 5 pounds of grass seed is about the proper ratio. The use of White Dutch clover is a matter of individual taste.

WHEN TO SEED

Where water is available, the best time to seed a lawn in this area is when the daytime temperatures are above 70 degrees. This will be roughly between the dates of May 20 and Sept. 15. Usually there are periods in July and August when the daytime temperatures are a bit higher than desirable. The chief objection to extra warm summer temperatures is that more watering will be necessary.



Good lawn seed, properly covered in good top soil, and with adequate moisture, should give you a green lawn in 10 days if temperatures are 70 degrees or above. Lawn grass that germinates and comes quickly gets the jump on the weeds.

Dryland lawns are perhaps best seeded in early spring, or just before a rain.

The temptation is terrific to seed a new lawn the first warm day in April. However, cool weather is almost certain to follow. Grass will come slowly, if at all, in cool weather. Weeds will have a better opportunity to compete with the grass in early spring seedings.

MOWING

Wait until new lawn is 2 or 3 inches high before the first mowing, but do not let the grass get long enough to topple over. Set the mower to cut at least 2 inches high for the first cutting.

Lawns maintained at this longer length are better appearing. The beauty of a lawn is in the color and texture of the grass blades. Close clipping removes most of the green blades, exposes the yellowish stems and gives the lawn a parched and hungry appearance. Taller growth also provides shade, and so lessens direct evaporation of soil moisture. In drouth periods these factors may mean the difference between saving and losing the lawn.



Improper cutting can ruin the effects of careful preparation and fertilization. Frequent clipping close to the soil surface is severe treatment which few plants can withstand for any length of time and thrive. Lawn weeds tolerate such punishment better than grass. Where close clipping leaves the soil bare, weed seedlings get a start.

Let grass make a good growth early in the spring before mowing begins. To clip close and often at this time favors weeds at the expense of grass.

Since rate of growth varies so much in different lawns and in different season, no definite schedule for mowings can be given. Ordinarily, do not mow your lawn oftener than once each week or 10 days. In late fall, delay cutting much longer, so food manufactured by the leaves may be translocated to the underground parts to protect the grass through the winter and provide energy for early, thrifty spring growth. A fair "rule of thumb" is to mow whenever the growth is 1 inch taller than when cut last. Adjust the mower to cut as high as possible, or about 2 inches.

Clippings left on the lawn form a mulch which helps hold the moisture. Unless growth is excessive and unsightly, leave cut grass on the lawn. Heavy clippings may mat and injure the grass in wet weather if left on the lawn.

WATERING

Start watering an established lawn when the grass appears to be in need of moisture. This is usually indicated by dull color and in heavy soils by the soil becoming hard with occasional cracks. A bright sun, accompanied by brisk wind, can evaporate soil moisture rapidly even in April.

Lawn grasses have comparatively shallow root systems and need frequent watering. Thorough watering occasionally is preferred to frequent sprinkling. Frequent light sprinklings encourage more shallow rooting. Very shallow rooted lawns are more likely to suffer in periods of severe heat.

FERTILIZING

Lawns benefit from the application of plant food. This may be either screened rotted manure or a commercial fertilizer. Rotted manure should be applied at the rate of about 1 bushel basket per 30 square feet. Apply in the early spring. Rake in well to obtain even distribution.

Good commercial lawn fertilizers are those with the formula: 20-0-0 (ammonium sulfate); or 33-0-0 (ammonium nitrate).

Rates of application suggested:

20-0-0 ----- 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet

33-0-0 ----- 6 pounds per 1,000 square feet

A well fed lawn, regardless of the kind of fertilizer used, is much better equipped to fight the invasion of weeds such as dandelions.



WEEDS

Weeds are the result of a poor turf not the cause of it. The best insurance against weeds is a well-fed dense, healthy growth of grass. Selective weed killers are also helpful in controlling broad leaf weeds. However it is suggested you do not use selective weed killers the first season. These weed killers can be purchased locally. Follow directions on the container. Protect broad leaved cultivated plants growing nearby. Tomatoes are especially sensitive to fumes of 2,4-D, a chemical frequently used to control dandelions and several other broad leaved lawn weeds. If an occasional large weed becomes established in your new lawn, cut it rather than pull it. Pulling a large weed in a new lawn leaves a large hole and uproots several grass seedlings.



DANDELIONS

Dandelions need no description. Best controls are vigorous, healthy turf. When digging dandelions, cut the root several inches below the surface. If cut too shallow, the plant will develop a new crown and continue to grow. The dandelion is a perennial and, if unmolested, will grow from year to year.

CHICKWEED

Chickweed can live on poor as well as rich soil. It sometimes appears to have come in almost overnight. In reality, it blends so well into the grass that it spreads unnoticed for some time and becomes well established before steps are taken to eradicate it. The tiny seeds are constantly produced and always present in the soil, retaining their ability to germinate for many years.

Common chickweed (*Stallaria media*) is the one most commonly found in North Dakota. An annual, it has smooth, sometimes glossy, light green leaves, about 1/4 inch across and arranged opposite each other on the stems. The tiny white star-shaped flowers come very early in spring. The plant blooms and produces seed until late fall.

CRABGRASS

Crabgrass is an annual. It starts in lawns when the desirable grasses are weak and undernourished. New plants come from seed after the ground gets warm. Crabgrass is too common in many North Dakota lawns.

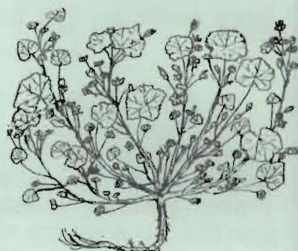
Crabgrass is a definite yellow-green in color. Its rather hairy leaves are about 1/4 inch broad. The plant grows spread-out flat on the ground. Wherever the stem joints touch the ground new roots develop to form another plant, which in turn produces still more plants. Mature plants are stiff and wiry.



Chickweed
(entire plant)



Crabgrass



Mallow

In late summer, crabgrass sends out flowering heads, arranged at the end of the stalk like fingers on a hand, and turning reddish brown or purplish as they mature. This is often the first stage at which the plants are noticed. By this time the damage is done, because part of the seed has already dropped to the ground.

MALLOW

Common mallow, an annual, is more properly classified as a barnyard, garden or wayside weed rather than a lawn pest. But, in recent years, it has received attention in lawns. Its leaves are round and heart-shaped. The low-lying stems trail the ground but do not root. The plant blooms from May to October, with pale pink blossoms shaped like hollyhocks. The ring of seeds resembles a tiny ridge cheese and gives the plant the common name, "cheese".

Occasional cultivation will keep mallow out of gardens, and it may be removed from lawns by hand weeding or hoeing before the seeds are produced.