



The Growing Season

Does your warm-season, hybrid Bermuda grass look sparse or weak? The culprit may be continuous overseeding. Often times, this is due to the competition for nutrients between the Bermuda grass and the perennial Ryegrass used in fall overseeding. Overseeding leaves the Bermuda needing recovery time to build strength and vitality before the next growing season.

Overseeding in the fall does not allow Bermuda grass to complete its normal growing cycle before winter dormancy approaches. Much like a bear preparing for hibernation, Bermuda spends the weeks and months prior to the cold season storing the reserves it needs to keep its roots and stems alive through the winter. Overseeding interrupts this process and often, die-back results in the root system. The effects of interrupting this process are seen in the spring when weather conditions are right for Bermuda to begin growing again. The thick, tall Ryegrass will keep the Bermuda shaded and cool, which prolongs the dormancy period. By keeping the Bermuda dormant longer, the percentage of Bermuda that runs out of food before it can begin to photosynthesize increases.



When the Bermuda does come out of dormancy, it must contend with the Ryegrass for nutrients while the Ryegrass is at its strongest. Ryegrass is a fierce competitor for all the resources required for Bermuda to grow: sunlight, water, nutrients and even oxygen. During early spring, the Bermuda is at a disadvantage during the time it should be strengthening to withstand the extreme heat and dryness of a typical Arizona summer. By mid-summer, the Ryegrass dies out and physically impedes the Bermuda's ability to spread. The dead Ryegrass must be removed through dethatching, which may further injure and set back the Bermuda. In most cases, the Bermuda does not get the time needed to recover because overseeding starts again in just a few weeks.

We recommend suspending the overseeding process for at least one season to help restore the root system and nutrients of the Bermuda grass.

During the Dormant Months

Not overseeding turf areas with winter Ryegrass changes the focus of your seasonal practices. The steps below will help you prepare for the next season of Bermuda grass during the winter:

- Mow twice monthly to maintain a clean appearance and even look
- Control weeds
- Top dress to fill in holes and areas of compaction



Bermuda overseeded
September 2007



Bermuda left dormant winter
2007



Note: Both turf areas shown above have experienced the same amount of resident activity since September 2007





What To Expect

Bermuda grass can stay green until the first frost, usually the middle of December. Around the middle to end of March, when nighttime temperatures begin to approach 60 degrees, Bermuda starts to grow again and returns to a regular mow and care cycle. It should also be noted that by not overseeding there are significant savings that can be helpful to any household. The following is a copy of an article written by a Water Conservation Specialist, highlighting some of the additional benefits.



Looking for Reasons to Not Overseed with Winter Rye?

by Donna DiFrancesco, Water Conservation Specialist, City of Mesa, Arizona

Sustaining a lush, green lawn throughout the year is appealing to many home and business owners. So if you're looking for a reason not to overseed, take a look at these...

Top Ten Reasons Not to Overseed with Winter Rye

Save time - No need to scalp the lawn, prepare the seedbed, seed, water, or mow.

Save water - Getting rye grass seed to germinate requires watering three times a day or more. By not overseeding, over 8,000 gallons of water can be saved for every 1,000 square feet of grass each season.

Preserve water quality - Less fertilizers and pesticides will be needed. Much of our water pollution comes from runoff of these products from urban landscapes.

Save money - Save on the cost of seed, labor, water, and gas for mowing.

Save landfill space - Scalping Bermuda grass creates a great deal of waste for the landfills.

Save the air - Gasoline mowers and other lawn equipment contribute to our air pollution problems, and the scalping process releases dust and other particles into the air.

Decrease noise pollution - Mowers, weed whackers, and leaf blowers have become a major source of background noise in many neighborhoods.

Save frustration - Problems with seed germination, fertilizers, diseases, and irrigation are all common when planting a winter lawn.

Set an example - We live in a desert and this is an opportunity to demonstrate your community leadership with a responsible outlook towards our water supply.

Overseeding Steps	Estimated Cost Savings / Acre
Ryegrass seed	
Preparation and mowing	\$650 / acre
Water used to germinate and maintain health	\$500 / acre
	<u>\$975 / acre (@ \$3.00/1,000)</u>
Total Estimated Cost Savings / Acre = \$2,125 / acre	

And the #1 Reason Not to Overseed with Winter Rye ...

Give your Bermuda a break - Overseeding can be stressful for your Bermuda grass. In the fall, scalping the summer grass before dormancy doesn't allow for adequate storage of energy in the roots. In the spring, the rye competes with Bermuda, and customers often withhold water to transition from winter to summer grass. Unfortunately, this will also stress the Bermuda.

