



SHAWNEE COUNTY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENERS

STEPS TO OVERSEEDING A TALL FESCUE LAWN

1. There are two alternatives for this first step and your choice depends on existing weeds conditions.
 - *Alternative #1. If the weeds in your lawn are particularly bad, then a month before seeding use a broadleaf weed killer like Trimec, Weed-Out, or Weed-B-Gon to kill existing weeds. Do not use chemicals again until the new seedlings have been mowed three times.*
 - *Alternative #2, If the weeds are not particularly bad, you may choose not to spray for weeds and proceed to the next steps.*
2. Whichever alternative you chose in Step 1, mow existing grass short, about 1 inch and remove debris. This will keep grass and/or weeds from competing with the new seedlings, help prevent seeds from lodging in the tall grass and allow for good light penetration.
3. There are at least three options for creating good seed to soil contact. The best is to core aerate and then slice the soil, but doing just one of these is generally sufficient. It is also a good practice, whether overseeding, or not, to core aerate once every couple of years to prevent soil compaction. Whichever method you chose, run the machine over the lawn in two directions. The second pass should be at 90 degrees to the first. It will be easier to accomplish this work if the soil has been moistened two or three days in advance. It is also possible to create conditions for good seed to soil contact manually by using a garden rake, but that can be strenuous work if the area is large.
4. Buy a blend of tall fescue seed recommended by K-State and labeled 0% "other seed" and 0% "weed seed".
5. Use a drop or broadcast seeder and, when overseeding, apply 3-4 pounds of seed per 1,000 sq. ft. of lawn. Too much seed can result in turf death from overcrowding.
6. Lightly rake in the new seed.
7. Fertilize with a turf starter fertilizer.
8. Initial irrigation should slowly saturate the entire soil profile to about 6 inches deep. After that, water frequently enough that the soil surface stays damp, but not soaking wet. A good schedule is to water three times per day for 10 minutes and repeat for two weeks. Decrease irrigation frequency and increase amounts as turf matures.

9. Mow as soon as new grass reaches a height of 3 inches with the blade set at 2 inches. Regular mowing stimulates grass to spread rather than grow upright.
10. Apply a late fall fertilizer in November. Use a mix that is high in nitrogen and quick release.
11. Apply a pre-emergence weed killer in the spring when redbuds are in bloom to prevent crabgrass. The best time to treat for broadleaf weeds is late fall, but if you did not treat for broadleaf weeds before overseeding, treat for broadleaf weeds in April. See step 12 regarding future treatment for broadleaf weeds.
12. Adopt a pattern of fertilizing once in September, which is the most important time to fertilize, and then again in November. Treat for crabgrass, if needed, when the redbuds are in bloom and treat for broadleaf weeds in late fall.

Works Cited

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- K-State Research and Extension – Johnson County (2016) Recommended Turfgrass for Kansas, https://www.johnson.k-state.edu/docs/lawn-and-garden/in-house-publications/turf/2016_K-State_Turfgrass-Recommendations.pdf

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