

FESCUE LAWNS IN THE FALL SEASON

You are probably aware of the difference between last year's heat and drought and this year's rain and cooler temperatures. Fescue lawns are doing somewhat better than last year due to the rains we have had and the cooling weather. But, the summer heat still makes it tough on Fescue yards. So, have the steps for Fall Fescue maintenance changed? Not really. The steps and suggestions will be very similar for continued good growth throughout the fall and winter. The fungus disease, Brown Patch, which often appears and kills fescue when heat stressed, has not been as significant of a problem this year and should be even less of a problem in our area this fall.

We are approaching the best time of the year in northeast Oklahoma for seeding a new fescue yard or for over-seeding existing fescue yards. The dates recommended by the OSU Extension Service for seeding in either case are from September 15th to October 15th. It is recommended that a soil sample be taken if you're starting a new Fescue lawn or if you are having any problems with an existing Fescue lawn. If you have not taken a soil sample in 3-4 years, now is the optimum time to have it done. Before you start seeding, it is recommended that you prepare your lawn by breaking up the soil. This can be done by heavy raking, using a tiller, or by renting a soil aerator or de-thatcher. Measure the area to be over-seeded in order to determine the amount of seeds and fertilizer that will be needed. When finished prepping the soil, use a mechanical-drop seeder to spread seeds rather than hand-sowing seeds as it will produce improved results. Don't forget that you will need irrigation facilities to make sure the seeds stay moist until they germinate and also to maintain that nice-looking fescue yard.

As for the proper seed mix, the OSU Extension Service recommends a blend of three (3) or more fescue seed varieties. The inclusion of Kentucky bluegrass for a mix of grass species is optional. There are many brands available which come pre-mixed. The amount of seed to be applied in over-seeding should be listed on the seed bag. You should pay more to get a high-quality seed which has very low weed seed contaminant content. These products can be found in most of the nurseries and other garden outlets. And, as the saying goes that "more is not always better", avoid applying more seeds than is recommended. Finally, once the seed is spread, be sure to keep the area dampened (not soaked) for two weeks to allow the seeds to properly germinate. Otherwise, all of your hard work may not produce the results you expected.

Additional detailed information can be found at: <http://www.tulsamastergardeners.org> – then “Lawn & Garden Help” – then “Turfgrass”.

Relevant OSU Fact sheets:

[L-442](#): Fescue Maintenance (Green Sheet)

[HLA-6419](#): Establishing A Lawn in Oklahoma

[HLA-6420](#): Lawn Management in Oklahoma

[HLA-6608](#): Managing Turfgrass in The Shade in Oklahoma

[L-249](#): Taking Soil Samples