

## **Planting Winter Ryegrass Overseeding in Southern Arizona Desert Regions**

The fall weather is finally upon us and the evening temperatures are starting to dip. Its time to start thinking about your winter lawn, and right now is the time to start preparing.

### **Picking Your Grass**

There are two types of Rye grass commonly used in Tucson for fall lawns.

#### **Perennial Ryegrass**



Perennial Ryegrass is heat resistant, has a darker green color and thinner leaf and can be mowed to about one inch. It germinates and emerges quickly and has more shoots per square inch than Annual Ryegrass making it a better turf grass, but it costs more.

Perennial Ryegrass is commonly available in blends of multiple varieties. These blends help to optimize different characteristics such as appearance and growth.

Pros: Thick turf quality, quick germination, shorter mowing height, customizable blends and deep green color.

Cons: Higher cost, a more difficult transition to Bermuda, and more maintenance and mowing.

## **Annual Ryegrass**



Annual Ryegrass is cheaper, much lighter in color, has wider leaves, and has a higher mowing length of 2+ inches. It does not handle heavy traffic well, and it has a lower tolerance to heat and will die out sooner in the year.

Pros: Cheap, easy to maintain, and easy transition to Bermuda

Cons: Can't be mowed short, and has low traffic and heat tolerances.

## **When to plant**



Ryegrass requires cooler temperatures to germinate. It should be seeded when overnight temperatures are in 60-65 on average. In Tucson this is usually late September to mid/late October.

## **Preparing your Lawn**

One of the most important steps is making your ground ready for the new grass.

### **Barren Topsoil**

Barren topsoil requires preparation prior to its first lawn. The ground should be tilled 4-6 inches and rocks and debris should be removed. Compost is then tilled into the topsoil to create an amended healthy growing medium. Use a water drum roller to level the ground. This may take more than one pass.

As an alternative, a fresh layer of already amended soil can be placed above your existing soil. Hard clay topsoil should still be broken up to prevent drainage issues and root rot.

[Native Planting Blend](#) is a 50-50 blend of Tucson area Sandy Topsoil and Native Compost. It is a thick amended soil ready to plant in. Consider rolling the soil prior to seeding to prevent lumps and uneven settling.

### **Bermuda Lawns**

Lawns with existing Bermuda grass should be scalped. Set your lawn mower to ½" and mow the lawn until there is no more green foliage. This may take more than one pass. Next, the lawn should be thatched, raking up all the brown over growth and leaf clippings from the mowing process. Make two passes in perpendicular directions and remove the thatch and clippings.

## **Spreading the Seed**



Seed coverage for home lawns is 7.5 to 10 lbs per 500 sq. ft. Spread your seed in two directions, half in one direction and the other half in a direction perpendicular to the first. It is important to spread your seed as evenly as possible for the best results.

## Top Dressing



Spread seed should be covered with manure or compost. This cover aids in germination, amends the soil, and will help retain moisture and heat necessary to germinate your Ryegrass. Apply the top dressing 1/8" to 1/4" thick evenly over the entire lawn.

To ensure good contact between seed and soil, roll the entire area with a water drum roller filled only halfway with water. Roll the perimeter first and then finish the entire area.

There is a wide variety of composts and manures available, and your selection may depend on several factors.

For fine grained premium compost that spreads out smooth, a [Golf Course Grade Omni Compost](#) is ideal.

If the fall overnight temperatures are sub 60 and you're starting late, a [Manure Blend](#) will help your grass germinate.

If your budget is tight and you're looking for a discounted product, a [Native Compost](#) can be used.

For help with your selection, feel free to contact us and our office staff will be happy to help you.