

# Seeding a New Lawn



Lawns grow best and are easier to maintain in sunny, fairly level locations. If your site is steep or shady, consider planting a portion of it with grass and the rest with a groundcover to save on water and maintenance. When choosing the type of grass seed to plant, pick one that suits your climate and the intended use of your lawn. Many of the more recently developed cultivars are far more resistant to drought, insects, and disease than the older ones. There are also cultivars intended for heavy-use areas, and mixes for partially shaded sites.

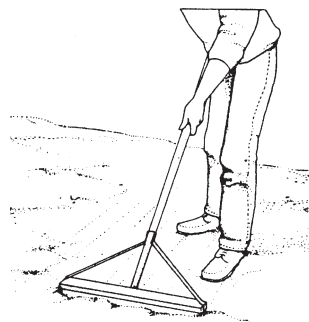
## 1. remove old sod

If you are replacing an existing lawn, strip off the old sod and put it in the compost heap. Remove the sod by hand with a sharp spade or sod cutter. Whatever the state of your site, be sure to dig out any weed roots, such as dandelions, and remove any debris and rocks.



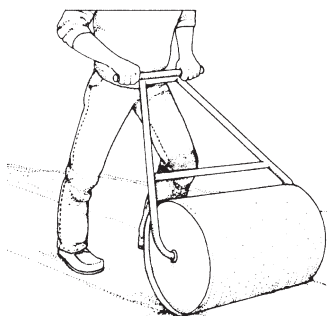
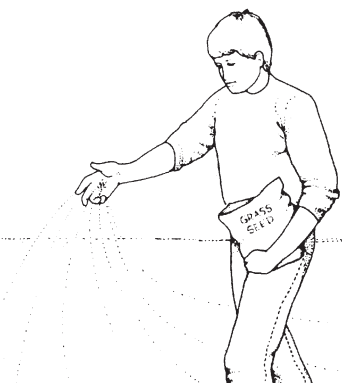
## 3. make the seedbed

Blend the amendments into the soil to a depth of six inches with a spading fork or rototiller. Then use a garden rake to smooth and level the seedbed. Slope the grade slightly away from the house or buildings. Firm the soil by running a lawn roller half-filled with water over its surface. Use a rake to fill in any remaining hollow spots that may hold puddles, and reroll them.



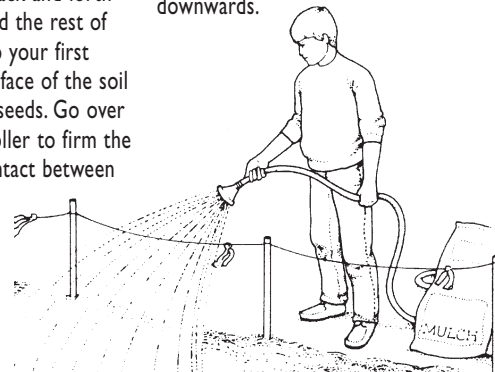
## 4. sow the seed

If the soil is dry, water it to a depth of about six inches and let the top inch dry before seeding. Choose a windless day to sow the seed. By hand, or with a broadcast spreader or drop seeder, scatter half of the seed as you walk back and forth across the seedbed. Spread the rest of the seed at right angles to your first route. Lightly rake the surface of the soil just enough to cover the seeds. Go over the area with an empty roller to firm the seed and ensure good contact between seed and soil.



## 5. mulch, water and care

Covering the area with a thin layer of mulch will help keep the soil moist and discourage the birds from eating the seeds. Then, water the seedbed. Keep it moist until the seeds begin to grow—about two to three weeks, depending on the type of seed. Water lightly several times a day to keep the surface of the soil moist, taking care not to wash out the seed or young seedlings. As the grass becomes established, gradually decrease the frequency of irrigation, but increase the amount of water applied each time. To keep the tender young grass safe until it is strong enough to handle foot traffic (usually six to ten weeks after sowing), set up a temporary fence around the area. You can begin mowing when the grass is about three inches high, or when the blades begin to curve downwards.



## 2. amend the soil

Grass grows best at a pH between 6.5 and 7.0. A soil test will indicate if you need to add lime or sulfur. Now is the time to add organic matter to improve the soil's texture and its ability to hold moisture and nutrients in the root zone. Spread a generous amount of organic material, such as compost, rotted manure, or sawdust that has been aged or fortified with nitrogen. Then broadcast a high-phosphorus fertilizer, such as 7-21-7, evenly over the area at the rate specified on the label.

