



Darbys Earn Recognition

A well-established lawn, maturing trees and variegated foliage create an inviting setting at the home of Ellen and Bud Darby, 629 Mill Slough Lane, Sea Trail, the September yard of the month of the Sunset Sands Garden Club. The Darbys are shown above with club representative Ruth Asmussen (left). The Darbys moved here 11 years ago from Dover Plains, N.Y.



Yards Share Monthly Honor

Beautiful complementary landscaping prompted the Carolina Shores Garden Club to select two adjacent homes for its September yards of the month. The green lawn of Hez and Jaunita McCain (right above), 16 Bayberry Circle, and the pine straw yard of Bill and Peggy Goode (left above), 18 Bayberry Circle, create a parklike setting that beautifies the area as well as each home. Both couples have planted assorted shrubs, trees and flowering plants in well-planned arrangements pleasing to the eye.

Overseeding? Start With Healthy Turf

Dear Plant Doctor: I would like to overseed my yard but I am not sure about what to do. Please tell me what grasses to use, when to plant, what to fertilize with, and how to maintain. Any publications or advice you could offer would be appreciated.

Answer: Overseeding is the practice of seeding cool-season turf grasses into a warm-season turf prior to the onset of winter dormancy. Overseeding is most commonly performed to provide a lush, green turf during the winter months during which warm-season grasses are brown and dormant.

All warm-season grasses can be overseeded. However, centipede grass and St. Augustine grass turf stands are often severely damaged by routine overseeding.

Turf stands that are weak and sparse before overseeding will usually be in worse shape the following summer. A healthy, vigorous stand of grass is an essential ingredient for overseeding. The best warm-season grasses to overseed are bermuda and zoysia.

The ideal seeding time is three to four weeks prior to the first frost date or when the soil temperature at the 4-inch depth reaches 75 degrees Fahrenheit. For the coastal Carolinas, the first week of October is usually a good time to overseed.

Common annual rye grass is the seed most often used for overseeding home lawns. Higher priced perennial rye grasses are used for golf course greens or other high maintenance, high traffic areas. Recommended seeding rates of annual rye grass for residential lawns range from four pounds to 15 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet. I prefer lower seeding rates (5 pounds to 8 pounds per 1,000 square feet) because disease problems are usually less and there seems to be better recovery of the underlying warm-season grass the following season.

Successful overseeding involves good seedbed preparation.

Extremely close mowing just prior to overseeding is essential. Most bermuda grass lawns benefit from raking or moderate verticutting. This helps to eliminate some of the thatch and other lawn debris.

Uniform application of seed across the seedbed is essential for a beautiful lawn. Using a centrifugal (rotary) or drop-type spreader, apply half the seed in one direction and

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Turf Specialist



the other half moving at right angles to the first pass. A drop-type spreader is also really useful in defining edges. A drag-mat or old piece of chain link fencing should be lightly dragged across the newly seeded surface to ensure good seed penetration and soil contact.

A specially prepared soil or weed-free sand is often used by professional turfgrass managers to lightly topdress newly seeded areas, but this is usually too expensive and labor intensive for the homeowner.

Water the newly seeded grass until the soil is thoroughly wet three to five times daily. You want to use frequent light watering for establishing the grass. Rye grass will normally germinate in three to four days after seeding. Once seedling grasses are established gradually de-

crease the rate of irrigation. In our soils, mature grass stands require .5 to 1.0 inch of rain water or irrigation weekly.

Begin fertilizing about three weeks after seedlings emerge. Fertilization should be based upon a soil test. But in the absence of a soil test, apply three to four pounds of 8-8-8 per 1,000 square feet. Continue this fertilization program every four weeks throughout the winter.

Begin mowing when the new stand is 30 to 40 percent taller than the desired mowing height. Home lawns are best maintained at a mowing height of 1 to 1.5 inches. Do not allow the young rye grass to get too long before mowing. A sharp mower blade is essential to maintaining a ryegrass overseed since dull blades will pull up and damage the seedlings.

I have just given you the bare essentials. North Carolina State University has an excellent booklet, *Overseeding Bermudagrass Turf*, Brochure AG-352, that you can obtain from your local extension office or by sending a SASE to The Plant Doctor.

Send your gardening questions to The Plant Doctor, P.O. Box 109, Bolivia, N.C. 28422.

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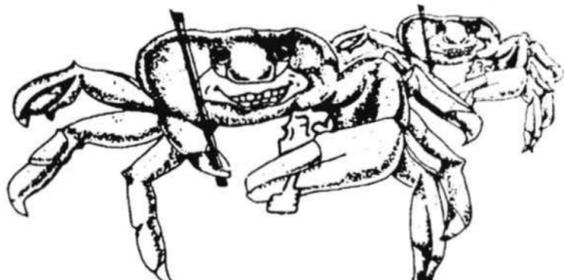
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