

# Seeding Tips For Maximum Results

With the introduction of new seeding equipment in recent years, let's look at some of the "do's and don'ts" of successful seeding.

I've been seeding turf for over 30 years and my company contract seeds thousands of acres of athletic fields, golf course tees, greens, and fairways. Some of the things that I see in the field can be quite disturbing. Operators now have the option of seeding up to 1 ½ inches deep. Some people actually try to seed that deeply! The main key to good seed germination is good seed-to-soil contact, right? Not necessarily! If it's Bentgrass, Bermudagrass, Ryegrass, Bluegrass, or Fescue, the results are always the same. **If you plant the seed too deep it's not going to grow.** Even if you have a bad thatch problem, **don't plant the seed so deep (to get in contact with the soil) that you bury it!** It will not come up when planted that deep!

For the smaller seeds such as Bentgrass, Bluegrass, or Bermudagrass, I've seen the best germination results when planting around 3/16 to 3/8 inch deep. Even for larger Ryegrass and Fescue seeds, the best germination rates seem to be when planted ¼ to ½ inch deep. If thatch is a problem, go ahead and plant the seed shallow, right into the thatch layer. This will give you the best germination rates, faster germination, and usually a cleaner seeding job. **After** getting the turfgrass re-established, **then** start to tackle the thatch issue. Through verti-cutting, top-dressing, and coring, the thatch can then be remedied with little disruption to play.

So remember, with all the new seeder technology out there.... Just because the seeder will go that deep,..... Don't!

Use plenty of seed. If you are going to the expense of seeding, whether hiring it out, or doing it yourself, don't be skimpy on the seed. If you try to save money by seeding at a lighter rate, and Mother Nature doesn't cooperate and you get a poor germination rate, the results may be sub-par. This can be embarrassing when players and/or spectators say "I thought you seeded this area", and you have to say "well, I tried to save money on seed and now I've lost my seeding window". Seed at a high enough rate so that if the germination rate is diminished, you will still have good seeding results.

By Bryan Wood

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After seeding, if you have irrigation, perform light frequent watering. Deep watering isn't important for good germination. Just keep the seed wet (2-5 times per day, depending on climate conditions).

Topdressing? On putting greens, a light "dusting" of topdressing is okay after seeding, just don't drag it in. Water it in. If you try to drag the topdressing, you will also drag the seed off of the high spots and into the low. In other areas, topdressing can be used as a light mulch to keep the seed protected and moist. Again, if you drag it in, you may drag the seed off of the high spots and into the low spots. Just use the topdressing as light mulch.

Mulch? Some people choose to mulch after seeding. Especially if you don't have irrigation in that area. Mulch will help to protect the seed and hold in moisture. I like to use a "hydro-mulch" or else pelletized mulch on bare ground, especially on slopes. Straw mulch will bring in weed seed that will have to be taken care of after establishment, but is a lot cheaper alternative if you insist on mulch.

Apply a good designated "starter" fertilizer at the same time as planting, this will help insure healthier and quicker establishment.

So there you have it: Pick the right seeder, seed the right depth, fertilize, water, and get ready to mow!

Happy seeding! 😊

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