



# No Mow Lawn Seeding Instructions



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## Important Preliminaries

Prairie Nursery's No Mow Lawn Seed Mix is a special blend of six different fine fescue varieties. Fescues have some of the deepest roots of all the turf grasses, making them more drought tolerant than bluegrass and other lawn grasses. Fescues also require much less nitrogen than other turf grasses, making No Mow a more ecological lawn choice. We generally recommend that you DO NOT apply nitrogen fertilizer to your No Mow Lawn.

### Site Conditions

No Mow thrives in most soil types and light conditions, including moderate shade. However, it is not recommended for planting in wet soils, heavy clay soils with little or no topsoil, or in deep shade. No Mow requires good drainage and will not tolerate standing water for more than a day or two at a time. If you wish to establish No Mow on clay soil, it will be necessary to add at least six inches of sandy loam topsoil over the clay. If the lawn will be irrigated regularly during hot dry weather only two to three inches of sandy loam topsoil will be required.

#### *Planting Steep Slopes and Erosion Prone Sites*

When planting steep slopes or other erosion-prone sites, we recommend using No Mow with Annual Rye nurse crop. The annual rye germinates rapidly and provides quick cover to help stabilize slopes. When planting erosion-prone sites in fall, the best dates for seeding are between August 20 and September 20. This provides time for the annual rye and fescue to grow and hold the soil before the onset of winter. On steep slopes, the application of biodegradable erosion-control blankets is recommended. No Mow with Annual Rye is recommended only in USDA Hardiness

Zones 2-4. In warmer zones (5 +) the annual rye does not always die over winter, and can compete with the No Mow.

### When to Plant

*The best time to plant No Mow Lawn Seed Mix is between August 20 and October 20.* Fall seeding is strongly recommended, ideally when daytime highs drop below 80 degrees. The fescue grasses germinate during the cool, often damp fall months. Most weeds germinate in spring, so fall plantings typically have far fewer weeds than spring seedings. If fall planting is not an option, the best time to plant in spring is between March 15 and May 15. *Seeding between June 1 and August 15 is not recommended, except in cool climates that do not experience hot summers.* Fescue grasses do not generally germinate well in the heat of summer, and drought is always a concern during this time.

### Prepare Your Site Thoroughly!

To achieve a successful planting, your site will need to be properly prepared in advance. To prepare your site for planting *all existing vegetation must be killed or removed.* Existing lawn grass, weeds, and other plants will compete with the No Mow seeds for nutrients, moisture, and sunlight. *All perennial weeds must be eliminated prior to seeding.* Perennial weeds such as quackgrass, bromegrass, thistles, creeping goldenrods and other aggressive plants will present a long-term problem if not controlled prior to seeding your No Mow turf. Annual weeds which are present in the soil as seeds can require your attention in early going (establishment stage), but should not pose a long-term threat.

These guidelines are based on our experience. If you have any questions, call or email us with your concerns. We will do our very best to ensure the success of your No Mow Lawn.

800-476-9453  
Mon – Fri, 8am to 4pm CST  
cs@prairienursery.com



## STEP 1: Site Preparation Methods

Since a variety of site conditions will be encountered when planting an area, it is difficult to write a standard “recipe” for site preparation and planting procedures. Select from the following site preparation Methods and Options to match your particular situation:

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### METHOD A: Existing Lawns

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#### *Smothering Option*

- Cover the site with either black plastic, old carpet, plywood or a thick layer of leaves or newspapers.
- Leave in place for a full growing season.
- Remove the “smother cover” in fall or the following spring.
- Plant into a prepared bed in fall, between August 20 and October 20.

#### *Sod cutting Option*

- Remove the top two to three inches of grass and soil using a sod-cutter.
- Till lightly and plant into a prepared bed.
- If deep-rooted perennial weeds are present, sod-cutting will not remove them. Follow the preparation procedures and time lines outlined in Option B, “Existing Crop Fields.”

#### *Cultivating Option*

- Cultivate two to three times at one week intervals to kill the lawn.
- Till the soil prior to seeding to break up remaining thatch and create a smooth seedbed.
- If perennial weeds are present, cultivate all growing season every two to three weeks and plant into a prepared bed, free of clumps of dead sod and thatch.

#### *Herbiciding Option*

- Apply a Glyphosate herbicide when the lawn is actively growing (in fall or spring).
- Till the sod under when the grass has turned brown, and break up the thatch to create a smooth seedbed. Plant in fall between August 20 and October 20, or in spring between March 15 and May 15.

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### METHOD B: Existing Crop Fields - Corn, soybeans, or small grains

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Before planting, check the field history of herbicide application. If herbicides with long-term residual activity in the soil (such as Atrazine) have been applied within the past year or two, consider testing the soil

for herbicide residue. Atrazine is commonly applied to cornfields, and can kill germinating seedlings of fescue grasses if present in sufficient concentrations.

#### *Cultivating Option*

- If perennial weeds are present, cultivate at a depth of four to five inches every two to three weeks from spring through fall. This should kill all the weeds on the site.
- Plant in fall between August 20 and October 20 for best results.

*Note: Year-long cultivation is Not Recommended on steep, erosion-prone sites.*

#### *Herbiciding Option*

- Spring: Spray once in mid to late spring, wait 10 days and plant into a prepared seedbed, between March 15 and May 15.
- Fall: Spray once after the crop is removed when weedy vegetation is still actively growing. Wait 10 days and plant into a prepared bed between August 20 and October 20.

*Note: If perennial weeds are present in the field, refer to “Old Field” herbiciding instructions below, and take a full year to prepare the site to remove problem weeds prior to seeding in fall.*

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### METHOD C: Old Fields - Abandoned agricultural fields that are grown to weeds

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#### *Cultivating Option*

- Mow and rake or burn the existing vegetation to the ground in late fall or early spring.
- Cultivate to a depth of four to five inches every two to three weeks from spring through late summer.
- Before planting, make sure all the existing weeds have been killed.
- Plant in fall between August 20 and October 20.

*Note: Year-long cultivation is Not Recommended on steep, erosion-prone sites.*

#### *Herbiciding Option*

- Mow and rake, or burn the existing vegetation to the ground in late fall or early spring.
- Apply a Glyphosate herbicide (Roundup) three times at six to eight week intervals during the growing season (mid-spring, mid-summer, early fall).
- When all vegetation is dead, till the soil and plant into a prepared bed between August 20 and October 20.

## STEP 2: Final Seed Bed Preparation

Just prior to planting, the soil should be prepared according to the type of planting method used. This is also a good time to improve the fertility and water-holding capacity of sandy soils, and the porosity of clay soils by tilling weed-free organic matter into the soil (i.e. compost, peat moss, mushroom compost, etc.).

### Broadcast Seeding or Drop Seeding and Mechanical Seeding With a Brillion Seeder

Applying seed from push-type broadcast and drop seeders requires a smooth, tilled and finely graded surface for firm seed-to-soil contact. The seed is simply raked lightly into the tilled soil, and rolled to firm it.

### No-Till or Slit Seeders

No-till drills and slit-seeders require a smooth, level soil surface completely free of weeds. Tilling is not necessary, unless the area is rough and requires re-grading and smoothing. No-till seeding and slit-seeding have the advantage of bringing up very few weed seeds from the soil below. Excess dead vegetation should be cut and removed, or burned prior to using slit-seeders to prevent fouling and clogging of the seeding mechanisms.

## STEP 3: Planting Methods

### When to Plant

*Fall (August 20 to October 20).* Fall is the best time to plant. Cool temps and gentle rains promote germination of cool season fescues. Weed germination is lower in fall than in spring. Fall-seeded lawns typically have far fewer weeds than spring-seeded lawns.

*Spring (March 15 to May 15).* Spring planting is a good second option. Spring seedings often require watering more frequently, summer drought can be a threat, and weeds are typically more competitive. Seeding No Mow between May 16th and August 19th is not recommended.



### METHOD 1: Broadcast Seeding or Drop-Seeding

- Requires a tilled seed bed free of rocks or clumps greater than one inch diameter.
- Fill broadcast spreader or drop seeder. Some seeders list the seeding rates for fescue grasses. If no listing is provided, experiment with setting the opening, so that the seed is distributed at the recommended rate of 7 lbs. per 1,000 square feet.
- Cover the seed with one eighth to one fourth inch of soil. Use a rake, or drag the planted area with seeding drag, or piece of chain link fence.
- Firm the seed into the soil by rolling with a roller, cultipacker, or similar implement.
- Mulch the planting with a light covering of straw such as oats, winter wheat or marsh hay. Approximately 50% of the soil should be visible through the straw. The mulch helps control erosion on gentle slopes, and retains moisture in sandy and clay soils.
- If working on steep slopes, it is recommended that the area be covered with an erosion-control blanket immediately after seeding. The grass will come up through the erosion blanket, and the soil will be protected from washing away during heavy rains.

### METHOD 2: Mechanical Planting with Tractor-Drawn Mechanical Seeders and “Slit-Seeders”

On areas greater than a 10,000 square feet, it is often more efficient to plant your No Mow seed using a mechanical seeder, such as a “Brillion” or “Land Pride” turf seeder. The Brillion seeder has heavy cast iron packing wheels that provide firm seed to soil contact. The ground must be freshly tilled when using a Brillion seeder. Land Pride turf seeders are similar to the Brillion seeders, with more aggressive soil preparation mechanisms. Brillion and Land Pride turf seeders are often available at equipment rental and farm rental establishments.

“Slit seeders” refer to various makes and models of seeders that plant the seed in rows by opening small slits in the soil at the time of seeding. “Ryan” walk-behind slit seeders are commonly available at many rental centers. When using a slit seeder, make sure not to set the slit seeder too deep, no more than 1/8 inch deep or less.

### METHOD 3: “No-Till Broadcast Seeding” For Fall Only

This method involves planting the seed into exposed, untilled soil following a sod-cutting, smothering, or herbicide treatment. The seed is broadcast onto the surface of the soil in late summer or early fall, without tilling or raking the seed into the soil. The mineral soil must be exposed for this method to work properly. *Do not use this method to seed into an untilled dead sod.* The dead sod will prevent good seed-to-soil contact. Dead sod also wicks moisture up out of the soil, drying out the surface soil in the germination zone. Dead sod can be aggressively detached to expose mineral soil, the thatch then removed and the seed applied, either by broadcast seeding or using a Slit Seeder. Areas that are seeded using this method must be watered regularly every morning for the first three weeks to encourage germination.

This No-Till Broadcast Seeding method is an excellent choice for steep slopes and erodible sites, since the soil is never exposed by tilling. The dead roots of the grasses or weeds that were killed by smothering or herbiciding will usually hold the soil over the summer during the site preparation process, as well as after the No Mow seed is planted. The No Mow with

Annual Rye should only be used for seeding steep slopes that require rapid stabilization. The annual rye will germinate quickly and help hold the soil while the fescue germinates and develops. If a seeded slope is to be protected with a straw or excelsior erosion blanket, there is no need to use No Mow with Annual Rye.

This seeding method is recommended for fall seeding ONLY. Spring seedings are subject to higher temperatures and greater chance of drought than fall seedings. However, success can be attained using this method with early spring seedings in March and April, with daily morning watering throughout the spring to maintain soil moisture.

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## METHOD 4: Hydro-Seeding

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The fine fescue grasses in the No Mow Lawn Mix can be successfully seeded using a hydro-seeder if desired. There are two basic methods of hydroseeding:

- a) Mix the seed with water only, and “shoot” the mixture onto a prepared seedbed of loose, weed-free soil. Hydromulch can then be applied separately in a second pass after the seed has been applied mixed with water only. The recommended seeding rate of 7 lbs. per 1000 square feet (300 lbs. per acre) can be used when using this two step method.
- b) Mix the seed with water and hydromulch, and “shoot” this mixture onto the prepared seedbed in a single pass. Due to the fact that much of the grass seed will be suspended in the hydromulch and is not in close contact with the soil, a certain percentage of seedlings will not become successfully established. The seeding rate using this method should be increased to 10 - 11 lbs. per 1000 square feet (430-470 lbs. per acre) to account for this phenomenon.

## STEP 4: Post Planting Maintenance

Although No Mow plantings are low maintenance compared to other lawns, a some management is required to ensure successful establishment and growth.

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### Watering

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*Watering No Mow for the first two months after seeding is strongly recommended for best germination and growth.* Watering is essential during the first one to two months, increasing germination rates and seedling survival. Seeds should be watered every other morning for 15 to 30 minutes during the first four to six weeks after planting. This is especially important if planting on dry soils, or in late spring when temperatures are higher. Once established, the grass should be watered during dry periods. Occasional thorough soakings are better than frequent, light sprinklings. Deep soakings encourages deep root growth, and makes your turf more drought resistant.

During periods of drought your No Mow Lawn should be watered preemptively *before exhibiting symptoms of drought stress*, such as turning yellow or brown. During periods of hot, dry weather, the lawn should receive at least two inches of water per week, preferably with one or two

deep soakings. If the No Mow Lawn is allowed to turn brown due to drought stress it may not recover, even following a thorough watering or soaking rain.

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### Fertilizing and Weed Control

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Fertilizing is not recommended for No Mow fescue turf, and should be applied sparingly, if at all. If you must, fertilize in early spring or late summer. Use a slow-release, balanced fertilizer with equal portions nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. *Do not use high levels of nitrogen fertilizer on your No Mow turf.* This is far worse than no fertilizer at all.

If desired, your No Mow Lawn can be treated with the weed control and lawn care products that are labeled for use on fine fescue grasses. Always follow the directions when using herbicides and other lawn care products. These chemicals and fertilizers should be used sparingly, if at all.

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### Mowing

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It is *not* recommended to mow your No Mow Lawn closer than 3.5 inches. Close mowing will eventually damage the roots and weaken the turf. Fescue grasses often produce seed heads up to two feet tall in early to mid-June. To maintain a more manicured appearance, mow at four inches when the seed heads appear. This is usually the only mowing that will be required, unless a more manicured look is desired.

If you require a more “cropped lawn” look, occasional mowing will be necessary, but far less frequently than with other lawn mixtures. Mow once a month at a height of 3.5 or 4 inches, starting in spring and continuing throughout the growing season. Never remove more than the top one third of the leafy growth. This will scalp the lawn, severely harming the grass and creating an unsightly appearance.

No Mow turf can be mowed closely (two inches) in late fall at the end of the growing season — mid to late November in the northern half of the U.S. Close mowing at this time will remove old, dead leaves, helping reduce thatch buildup, and promoting a denser, thicker lawn the following year.

Your No Mow Lawn will form a soft, four to six inch tall flowing carpet of grass. In fall, leaves should be raked and removed to prevent them from smothering the lawn. An option to raking is to mow with a mulching mower after all the leaves have dropped. This shreds the leaves and encourages decomposition over winter. The nutrients from the mulched leaves are all the fertilizer your No Mow Lawn should need!



PRAIRIE NURSERY

www.prairienursery.com

800-476-9453 | Mon. - Fri., 8am to 4pm CST  
cs@prairienursery.com

P.O. Box 306, Westfield, WI 53964