



No Mow Lawn Fact Sheet



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Prairie Nursery's No Mow Lawn Seed Mix is a specially designed blend of six slow-growing fine fescue grasses. These cool season grasses are recommended for planting in northern climates of the United States and Canada (above approximately 37 degrees North Latitude). No Mow is also adapted to the coastal areas of the Pacific Northwest, the cooler mountain climates in the east-central states, and in the western mountains from the mid-elevation aspen woodlands to just below timberline.



The blend of fine fescue grasses in No Mow combines the characteristics of each variety to create a turf that:

- Grows to form a dense sod
- Thrives in full sun to partial shade
- Does not require fertilization
- Needs minimal watering (only during extended dry periods)
- Resists most turf grasses diseases
- Biologically reduces weed growth
- Reduces lawn maintenance dramatically
- Serves as an ecological alternative to traditional high maintenance lawns

No Mow thrives in full sun to partial shade on any reasonably well-drained soil, and is particularly well suited to growing on dry, sandy or rocky soils with low Nitrogen levels. Nitrogen fertilizer stimulates leafy growth, which only increases the need for mowing. The application of excessive nitrogen fertilizer can actually damage fine fescue grasses, so minimal or no fertilization is usually best. No Mow is not recommended for damp soils, or heavy clay soils with less than four inches of rich loamy topsoil.

Some of the fine fescue grasses in the No Mow Lawn Mix have been documented to possess allelopathic properties, in which the grasses produce compounds that prevent or retard the growth other plants and weeds. This “natural herbicide” makes No Mow particularly resistant to invasion by other herbaceous plants that often plague other types of turf.

COMPARISON OF COMMON COOL SEASON TURF TYPES

TURF TYPE	DROUGHT TOLERANCE	NITROGEN REQUIREMENT	SHADE TOLERANCE	COLD TOLERANCE	MOWING FREQUENCY	TRAFFIC TOLERANCE	THATCH FORMATION
NO MOW	Excellent	Low	Very Good	Very Good	Low	Fair	Medium
KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS	Good	Medium	Fair to Good	Very Good	Low to Medium	Good	Medium to High
TURF TYPE PERENNIAL RYE	Very Good	Medium to High	Fair to Good	Fair to Good	High	Excellent	None
IMPROVED TALL FESCUE	Excellent	Medium	Good	Good	Medium	Very Good	Low to None

Grass Varieties in No Mow Lawn Mix

No Mow is a blend of bunch-forming and Creeping fescues derived from species that are native to the Northern hemisphere. The bunch grasses are exceptionally drought resistant, thrive in low nitrogen soils, and have moderate tolerance to heavy foot traffic. The creeping fescues spread gradually by underground rhizomes to help fill in between the bunch grasses to create a weed-resistant sod. The creeping fescues also help to fill in areas that may experience turf damage.

Hard Fescue. Two different varieties of Hard Fescue are generally used in the No Mow blend. These “bunch” grasses are among the most heat and drought tolerant of the fine fescues. They grow slowly, thus reducing or eliminating the need for regular mowing. The Hard Fescues are the most tolerant of heavy foot traffic of the fine fescues. They do not tolerate close mowing (less than 3 inches).

Sheep Fescue. Another “bunch” grass, Sheep Fescue is extremely drought tolerant and can subsist on a diet of almost no Nitrogen. It is moderately wear tolerant, but will not perform well if closely mowed (less than 3 inches). Both Sheep Fescue and the Hard Fescues are slow growing and require little or no fertilization, making them ideal for low maintenance lawns.

Chewings Fescue. This bunch grass is among the deepest green of the fine fescues and makes a very high quality turf. It is the most competitive of the fine fescues, helping to crowd out weeds. Chewings Fescue thrives in acid soils, such as those found under conifers and oaks. Although more tolerant of close mowing than the other fine fescues, it does not stand up well to heavy traffic, and is prone to developing a thatch layer.

Red Fescue. This is one of the two creeping type fescues in the No Mow Lawn Mix. Similar in appearance and growth form to the “bunching” fine fescues (above), the “creepers” are also drought resistant and require little nitrogen. These “creepers” help to bind the bunch grasses together to forming a dense sod. Creeping fescues do not form a thick thatch layer. However, they are not tolerant to heavy traffic and do not respond well to close mowing. Red fescue is one of the most shade tolerant turf grasses. It also possesses a high salt tolerance that rivals Alkaligrass (*Puccinellia distans*, var. *Fults*), a turfgrass that is commonly planted in areas subject to high salt levels.

Creeping Red Fescue. Similar to Red Fescue, Creeping Red Fescue is the second creeping variety in the No Mow mix, and helps fill in damaged areas of turf. Creeping Red Fescue is the most tolerant of the fescues in the No Mow lawn mix, and can be cut at a height of two inches, as compared to four inches for most of the other fescue varieties. However, this is only one component of the No Mow lawn mix, so your fescue lawn should never be mowed lower than three to four inches.

The combination of these six complementary varieties of fine fescues makes No Mow Lawn Seed Mix a versatile and adaptable blend that is an excellent choice for a wide variety of planting situations and applications.

Growing Conditions & Requirements

Growing No Mow Lawn in Shade

No Mow will grow in full sun to partially shaded locations. One of the most shade tolerant turf blends available, it thrives in light to moderate shade and does particularly well under individual trees that receive indirect light from the sides. No Mow is an excellent choice for around surface-rooted trees that leave little available soil for turf. It thrives in woodlands composed of oak, hickory, elm, ash, birch, white pine, and other “open canopy” tree species that allow filtered light to reach the ground level. No Mow will grow under spruce trees that receive light around their edges, provided that the surface layer of needles and duff are removed to expose the mineral soil prior to seeding. When planted under deciduous trees the leaves must be raked off or thoroughly chopped up with a mulching mower after autumn leaf fall to prevent smothering of the turf grasses over winter. No Mow will not perform well in deep shade, as occurs under Sugar Maples and dense stands of conifers.

Growing No Mow Under Black Walnut Trees

No Mow is capable of thriving under the shade of black walnut trees. However, the leaves and nuts must be removed in fall, to prevent damage by high levels of the plant toxin produced by walnuts called Juglone. Black walnuts, like oaks and hickories, cast moderate shade at the ground level, creating ideal growing conditions for the shade-tolerant fine fescue grasses.

Soil Conditions

No Mow thrives on any reasonably well-drained soil, and is particularly well suited to growing on dry, sandy or rocky soils with low Nitrogen levels. No Mow is not recommended for consistently damp soils, or heavy clay soils.

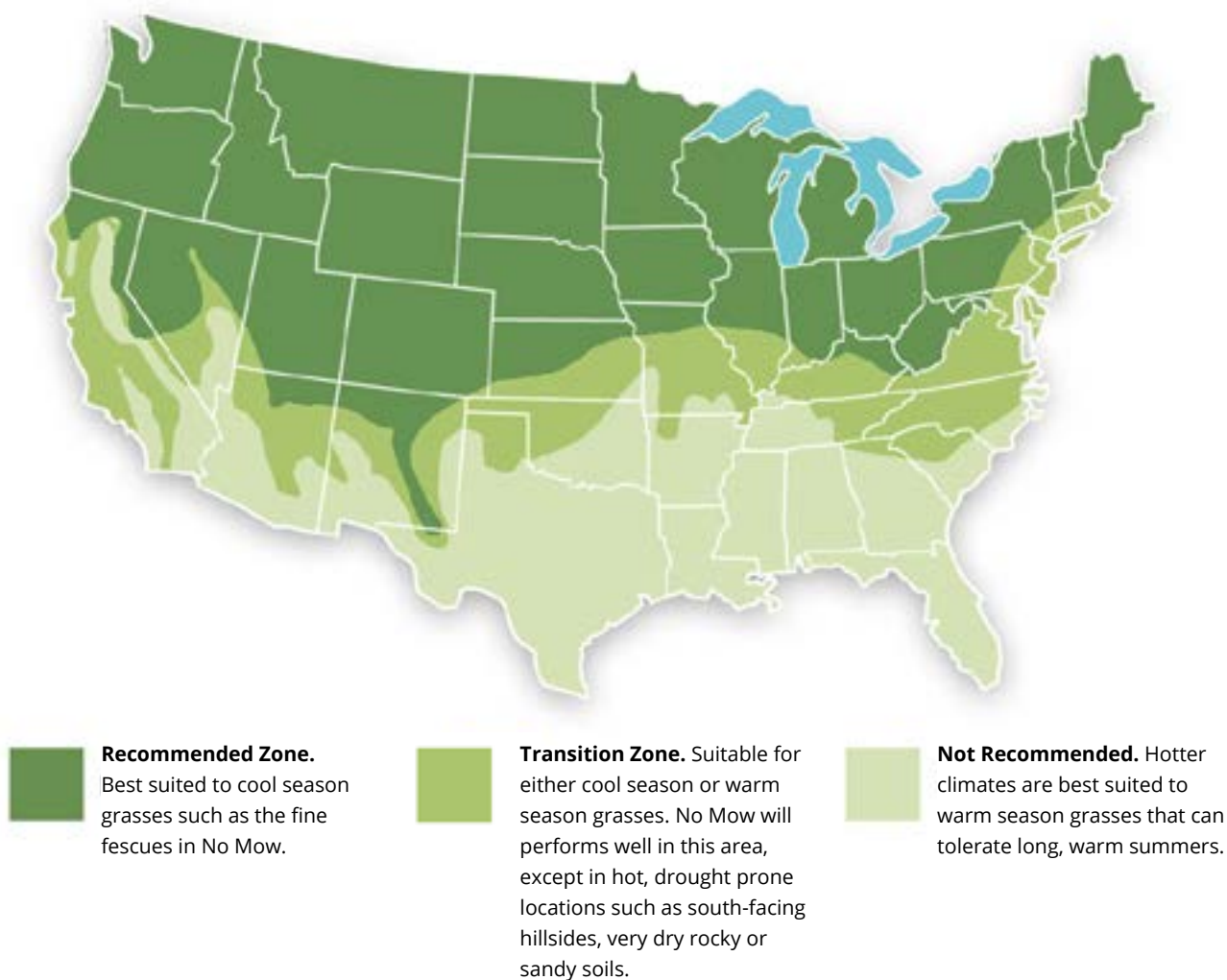
Rainfall Requirements

No Mow does best in climates that receive annual precipitation of 25 inches or more, with at least half arriving during the growing season. In drier climates with less than 25 inches of rain, supplemental irrigation can be supplied during dry periods in summer. No Mow is more drought tolerant than Kentucky Bluegrass, making it an excellent alternative for cool, arid climates. While it is an extremely drought tolerant grass blend, No Mow will not survive extended droughts.

Soil pH Range (Acidity – Alkalinity)

The fine fescues in the No Mow Lawn Mix grow well in soils within a pH range of between 5.0 and 8.0. The optimum pH range for these grasses is between 5.5 and 6.5, but will thrive in a wide range of soil acidity and alkalinity.

No Mow Planting Zones



When to Use No Mow with Annual Rye

No Mow with Annual Rye is intended for use only in areas that are subject to erosion and require rapid soil stabilization. The annual rye germinates within a few days after the first rainfall or watering event, and grows rapidly to help hold the soil in place. On steep slopes, an erosion blanket should be applied over the seeded area and anchored with stakes to prevent soil erosion and loss of seed during rain storms. *When using an erosion blanket to protect the slope, the use of annual rye formulation is not necessary.* The standard No Mow mix (without annual rye) should be used on level areas that are not subject to erosion.

Annual rye can present a problem in warmer growing zones that do not experience cold, winter temperatures. Annual rye is normally killed by subzero temperatures in USDA Hardiness Zones 2–4. However in warmer zones (5–7) annual rye will typically survive the winter and return in spring to compete heavily with the fine fescue grasses in the No Mow mix. In severe cases, the annual rye can outcompete the fine fescues and render the planting a failure. If a nurse crop is required in USDA Zones 5–7, oats can be seeded with the regular No Mow Lawn Mix at a rate of 64 lbs per acre (1.5 lbs per 1000 sq. ft.) in spring and 128 lbs per acre (3.0 lbs per 1000 sq. ft.) in fall. The oats can be mowed to keep it short, and will die over the winter when seeded in the fall.

Preparing the Site and Seeding Your No Mow Lawn

Site Preparation

Prior to seeding, all the existing vegetation must be completely eliminated. If renovating or converting an existing lawn, the grasses and weeds on the site must be killed or removed before planting. This can be accomplished by a variety of methods:

- Spraying with a glyphosate herbicide (such as "Roundup")
- Smothering with black plastic, newspapers, cardboard, old cardboard, etc
- Repeated cultivation over a multi-month period (not recommended for erodible sites)
- Removing the turf with a sod cutter (this method will not kill tap-rooted weeds) Areas such as abandoned fields that occupied by perennial weeds will require one to two years of site preparation in order to completely kill the existing weeds and reduce the weed seeds that are harbored in the soil. The most effective method to accomplish this is repeated applications of glyphosate herbicide every six to eight weeks during the growing season (three to four time per year). This will eventually kill the existing vegetation, as well as many of the weed seeds in the soil after they germinate.

An alternative to herbicides is smothering the soil or repeatedly tilling the soil for one to two years. However these two methods do not reduce the weed seed populations in the soil. Cutting the sod and removing it is not recommended for abandoned fields, since this does not remove deep-rooted or rhizomatous perennial weeds. They will likely re-sprout and re-infest the newly seeded No Mow planting.

For more information on site preparation and other planting information, please refer to our publication entitled No Mow Seeding Instructions.

Recommended No Mow Seeding Rates

For Lawns:

5 lbs. per 700 sq. ft.; 7 lbs. per 1000 sq.ft.; or 300 lbs. per acre

For Low Maintenance Fields, Orchards, etc:

5 lbs. per 1400 sq. ft.; or 150 lbs. per acre

Areas that are intended to be low maintenance fields rather than lawns can be seeded at one half the normal lawn seeding rate. The No Mow turf will take longer to develop at this lower seeding rate, but will typically fill in to form a sod within one full year. **Germination:** No Mow seed will generally germinate within 10 – 14 days after the first watering or rainfall event.

Seeding Dates

The optimal window for seeding No Mow is between late August 20 and October 20. Cool season grasses germinate well during the cooler weather of late summer and early fall, while most weeds germinate in spring and early summer. By the following spring the fescue grasses are in control, and leave little room for the germination of weed seeds in the soil. Cool season lawns that are seeded in fall experiences markedly less weed competition than spring seedings, mature faster, and should form a sod by the end of the following spring.

No Mow can also be seeded in early to mid-spring, between March 15 and May 15, but these seedings will experience greater weed competition and usually require more watering as the temperatures rise going into summer. Development of the turf is slower than with fall seedings due to increased competition from weeds and slower growth during the heat of summer.

Seeding Methods

No Mow can be seeded by various equipment, including:

- Hand seeding (for small areas only)
- Push-type grass and fertilizer spreader
- Over the shoulder hand-cranked whirlybird type seeder
- Turf slit-seeder
- Tractor mounted broadcast seeder, such as a “Brillion” seeder
- Tractor mounted slit seeder
- Hydro-seeder

When seeding by hand, with a push type spreader, or whirlybird seeder, the seed should be raked into the soil lightly and then rolled with a roller to ensure firm seed to soil contact. Covering with clean, weed-free straw (such as winter wheat, oat, or rye straw) will help retain soil moisture and improve germination. Erodible slopes should be covered with a light straw or excelsior erosion blanket and staked into the ground to hold it in place.

No Till Seeding Tip for Fall Plantings

No Mow can be seeded in the fall without tilling the soil, provided that the seedbed is smooth and level. The No Mow seed can be spread using hand equipment or mechanical seeder directly into dead sod in the fall that has been completely killed using glyphosate herbicides.

The seeded area must be kept watered regularly, usually every morning for about 15 to 20 minutes. Regular watering is required to maintain soil moisture at the soil surface where the seed is germinating.

The area should green up in about two weeks as the fescue seedlings begin to appear, at which point watering can be reduced to once every three days (provided cool fall weather prevails and the soil does not dry out rapidly). This simple method typically yields an excellent stand of No Mow turf with a minimum of work. It is particularly well suited to seeding on slopes where soil tillage can lead to erosion. If seeding into a thick, dead sod on a slope, there is no need to apply an erosion blanket, since the roots of the dead plants will hold the soil in place while the new No Mow seedlings develop and stabilize the soil.

Maintaining a No Mow Lawn

Watering

Newly seeded No Mow plantings that have been mulched with straw or protected with an erosion blanket should be watered every two to three days for two weeks to encourage germination. Plantings that are not covered with straw mulch or an erosion blanket should be watered every one to two days (or whenever the soil dries out). Fescue grasses generally germinate in ten days under good growing conditions, and new plantings usually “green up” in about two weeks as the new seedlings become visible. Once the seedlings are evident, watering can be reduced to twice a week, unless the weather is hot and dry and necessitates more frequent watering. Once the new grass seedlings are one half inch to one inch tall, watering can be discontinued, except under hot dry conditions.

An established No Mow lawn requires no additional watering, except during extended dry periods in summer. Occasional, deep watering once a week or so provides moisture to the lower roots, and is far superior to frequent, shallow watering. Water before the grass begins to turn brown. Once it turns brown it has entered

dormancy, and all the water in the world will not green it up. Non-irrigated No Mow lawns that turn brown during summer drought will typically green up when cool, moist weather returns in late summer and early fall.

Fertilization

We do not recommend using fertilizers on No Mow. The use of lawn fertilizers that contain phosphorus are not allowed in many communities and near lakes and streams, due to the negative effects on water quality and algae blooms. Do not apply fertilizers that are high in Nitrogen. Fine fescue grasses require only a bare minimum of Nitrogen. Application of nitrogen can damage fine fescue turf, and is strongly discouraged.

We offer the following tips and information about soil amendment:

1. Always test your soil before adding soil amendments. In most cases, the soil already has sufficient nutrients to support a fescue lawn. The addition of any fertilizer in such cases is unnecessary and only increases the pollutants in water runoff.
2. The best time to conduct a soil nutrient test is in late summer or early fall (late August to early September). This provides a good estimate of the soil nutrient conditions in advance of fall fertilizing.
3. Fall is the best time to apply fertilizer to lawns composed of cool season grasses, since these grasses have a strong late season growth spurt that builds their root systems for the following year. Fertilizer should not be applied in summer, as cool season grasses typically enter a dormant period and do not take up nutrients efficiently.
4. Loamy and sandy loam soils seldom, if ever, require fertilizing. However, the first step in amending sandy soils is to check the pH to see if liming is necessary. Lime is essential in facilitating the availability of nutrients in the soil. Without first correcting the pH, the addition of any fertilizer is a waste of time.
5. Fine fescues can sometimes benefit from the addition of phosphorus and potassium in early fall, but only if your soil is low in these nutrients. Acid soils can benefit from fall-applied lime. Highly alkaline soils respond well when elemental sulfur is applied in fall to reduce the alkalinity of the soil.
6. A simple soil test for the following nutrients will determine what, if any additional nutrients your soil requires to grow a good lawn: pH (acidity – alkalinity), Calcium, Magnesium, Phosphorus, Potassium.

Mowing

No Mow lawns may require occasional mowing during the first two years of establishment to control weeds, especially with lawns that are seeded in spring. Most annual weeds can be controlled by mowing at a height of four inches in the first growing season. If biennial weeds such as sweet clover, Queen Anne's Lace, burdock, etc. are a problem in the second year, they should be mowed at four inches just as they begin to flower, usually around mid June. This carefully timed mowing will kill most biennials. A few may survive the mowing, and should be mowed at four inches a second time when they re-bloom later in the season.

Fine fescues do not tolerate close mowing, and should not be mowed any lower than 3.5 - 4 inches. Never remove more than one third of the total leaf material when mowing, or the turf will be damaged.

Once a No Mow Lawn is Established, there are Several Mowing Options:

No Mowing: This results in a turf with leaves six to eight inches in high, that will drape over one another to create a low-growing meadow effect. Seedheads, two feet tall, will appear in early to mid June. The seedstalks will typically fall to the ground by late summer, and the lawn will revert to its normal height of six to eight inches.

Late Spring Mowing: Many people mow their No Mow lawn once a year in June when the seedheads appear.

Mowing the grass to a height of four inches removes the seedheads and the turf will re-grow to its normal six to eight inch height.

Fall Mowing: This is a good option for No Mow Lawns under trees or in open woodlands. The fescue grasses usually will not form seedheads when grown in the shade, so June mowing is often not needed. However, leaves from deciduous trees must either be raked up and removed, or chopped up with a mulching mower in order to prevent smothering of the turf over winter. To encourage denser turf growth, No Mow lawns should be mowed to a height of one to two inches in late fall, usually around Thanksgiving. This removes dense leaf growth to expose the soil, thus encouraging higher stem density and a thicker turf the next year.

Regular Mowing: For a manicured, traditional lawn look, regular mowing can be done once a month, or anytime the grass reaches a height of five to six inches. *Fine fescues should not be mowed any lower than 3.5 - 4 inches.*

Late Spring, plus Fall Mowing: Mowing twice a year is a very popular maintenance strategy.

De-Thatching

Fine fescues tend to develop a thatch layer near the soil surface over time. Thatch is composed of dead grass that does not completely decompose. It can smother the growth of new grass shoots, reducing the density of the lawn and creating "dead" spots. The thatch layer also tends to retain moisture at the ground level, which can encourage the growth of fungal diseases. Thatch development is encouraged by high levels of soil Nitrogen, and is more common in rich soils and lawns that are regularly fertilized. If thatch builds up to the point where dead grass is visible and the grass begins to thin out, the lawn should be de-thatched.

De-thatching can be accomplished using a mechanical de-thatcher or power rake, or by hand using a de-thatching rake. Set mechanical de-thatchers to a depth where they lift the thatch without digging up the soil. If the thatch is particularly thick, the de-thatcher will need to be set deeper, and some soil disturbance will likely occur. The thatch should be raked out of the lawn and removed (it makes excellent mulch for gardens, flower beds, etc). If open soil is visible following de-thatching, the affected areas should then be over-seeded with No Mow lawn mix.

Timing of De-thatching is Very Important

Cool season fescue lawns should be de-thatched in mid-spring after the grass has greened up and begun active growth. De-thatching in early spring before the lawn begins to grow tends to encourage weeds.

Aerating

Aerating, or "core aerating" encourages the flow of air and water down to the roots of turf grasses in heavy soils, such as silt loams, clay loams, and silty clay loams. While we do not recommend planting No Mow on heavy soils, it can be successfully established in these conditions in shady locations, where heat and moisture stress are reduced by the shade of trees. The soil under a lawn that receives moderate to heavy foot traffic tends to become compacted over time, and aeration every few years can help mitigate that compaction.



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