

Re-Seeding Your No Mow Lawn After the Drought of 2012

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The drought of 2012 wreaked havoc on lawns of all types. This was the first time in over twenty years of working with this special grass blend that I saw No Mow lawns actually die on dry sandy soils. The heat and drought in the summer of 2012 were simply too much for it to survive.

Damaged and dead areas of the lawn should be re-seeded in early spring, at the first opportunity after the soil has dried out sufficiently to be workable. Dead sod should be removed to expose the soil below, in order to create a proper seedbed for over-seeding. This can be accomplished using a regular garden rake or a de-thatching rake. In areas where the entire lawn has died, the soil can be lightly tilled and the dead thatch raked out.

If the soil to be re-seeded is hard or clumpy, one inch of fresh, loose loamy or sandy loam topsoil should be applied on top. This will provide a good seedbed for germination. Hard, compacted soils should be tilled deeply (6 inches) to break up zones of compaction and allow proper air and water flow down to the roots. For best results, at least one inch of loamy or sandy loam topsoil should be applied over the existing soil after tilling.

Once the seedbed has been prepared, the areas can be re-seeded, either by scattering by hand or with a hand-push lawn seeder. The seed should then be raked into the soil and rolled or stepped on by foot to ensure firm seed-to-soil contact.

On larger areas, a "slit-seeder" can be used to drill new seed directly into the dead thatch without raking or tilling. This greatly reduces the amount of work required by eliminating raking, tilling, etc. Slit seeders can be rented at hardware stores and equipment rental facilities.

Note: Although the No Mow Lawn Mix does not require high levels of soil nutrients to thrive, it will benefit from the addition of a slow release, non-burning "starter fertilizer." Avoid fertilizers that contain Urea (a quick release Nitrogen source), as these can burn the young seedlings. The fertilizer should have a nearly equal balance of Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K). These are the three numbers listed in order (N, P, K) on the fertilizer bag (eg. 10-10-10).

Note: Phosphorus fertilizer should never be applied to lawns near lakes, streams and other waterways. Runoff from your lawn can cause algal blooms and harm water quality. Many municipalities and some states have strict laws governing the use of Phosphorus fertilizers on lawns. Once your No Mow lawn is established, you should not have to fertilize it to maintain it, unless you have extremely poor, sandy soil that has been tested and shown to be low in specific soil nutrients.

Once the seed has been planted, the area should be watered daily for 15-20 minutes in the early morning to help stimulate germination (unless it has rained recently). Once the little green grass shoots appear, watering can be cut back to once every three days. When the grass reach one inch high, watering will only be required about once a week. To ensure proper watering, install a rain gauge with a short post for installing at soil level and monitor how much water your new lawn receives. One inch of water per week is adequate in normal spring weather with temperatures between 55 and 80 degrees F.

Your new lawn will not have sufficiently deep roots to survive the summer without irrigation, unless you receive regular, timely rain. Plan to water your new lawn at least once a week in the absence of any significant rainfall. Long, deep waterings are better than frequent shallow waterings. Deep watering promotes root growth into the lower soil, making your lawn more drought-tolerant.

Watering should be done in the early morning, between 3 AM and 7 AM. Watering during the day is inefficient and can actually “burn” the grass by creating “water lenses” on the leaves that concentrate the sun’s rays, similar to a magnifying glass. Watering at night creates high humidity conditions at the ground level, which encourages the growth of harmful disease-causing fungi. Night watering should never be done during periods of high temperature and high relative humidity.

De-thatching your No Mow lawn every two to three years also helps reduce fungal diseases by improving air flow between the leaves and reducing the moisture-holding capacity of the turf near the ground level. In lieu of de-thatching, you can mow your lawn to a height of one to two inches in late fall (mid to late November) to reduce thatch buildup and stimulate denser grass growth in the ensuing spring. NEVER mow your lawn closer than 3.5 inches during the growing season, as this can severely damage it. Close mowing should only be done in late fall as the grass enters its winter dormant phase.

As always, please feel free to call or email us with any questions you may have. We appreciate your business. Thank you!