

## Lawn Renovation: Turf Seeding

By Linda Beattie of Schiller-Pfeiffer, Inc.

Starting a new lawn from seed is the least expensive and most commonly utilized method of establishing turf. Consistent depth, lay of seed, adequate moisture, and ground temperature are all crucial elements to the successful germination and establishment of new sod. The best time to start a new lawn or overseeding project is just prior to the grass's season of most vigorous growth. Depending on the climate and grass type found in the area, seeding a new lawn or overseeding an existing lawn is possible nearly all year round.

Warm-season grasses should be planted in late spring when the ground is tepid. The mild temperature of the soil will allow the seed to get established and the balmy summer heat enhances growth. Cool-season grasses seed best in fall, early spring, and, in some areas, winter. The ideal and most successful time to plant cool-season seed is late summer to early fall. The ground will still be holding onto some summer warmth, which speeds germination. The fall and winter months that follow will offer the seed a long cool season to become well established.

Seeding is the process of embedding seed into the soil at an appropriate depth. Seeding can be done manually by "turning the lawn" and dropping in seed. "Turning the lawn" is as literal and labor intensive as it sounds. But having a shovel and a good, strong back won't assure good results. Unfortunately, the fruit of your labor is often bare spots or weak, thin grass that grows sparsely due to the inconsistent depth of the seed. Seeding should be done in a criss-cross pattern to ensure complete coverage. Manual seeding can often spore a higher level of weeds due to the inconsistent lay of the seed. For an easier seeding experience that offers more successful growth and balanced thickness, a professional turf seeder is the most efficient and effective way to achieve a healthy lawn and rich, thick turf.

For established turf with bare or weakened, thinning areas caused by drought or traffic, overseeding is the best way to re-establish thick, healthy, more disease resistant turf. Professionals tend to dethatch and overseed at the same time. Dethatching first to remove any matted thatch. Doing both allows for the best possible penetration of seed and root establishment.

Turf seeders are generally easy to operate. However, the more versatile the turf seeder the more you should educate yourself on its proper use and care. Anyone who has ever turned over a lawn will tell you it's the most effective tool for the job. Seeding for the most part is seasonal, depending on your climate and ground conditions, and can offer a quick return on investment when you choose a unit that is versatile. Some seeders can be converted into a dethatcher or vertical cutter in minutes for additional turf renovation applications.

Some features to consider in a professional seeder are:

### Seed Box:

- ✓ Look for units with a raised seed box. If a seed box sets too low to the ground, moisture on the grass when seeding early in the day can cause seed in the hopper to clump or clog the hopper opening. Look for a seed box that sets higher up on the unit to help eliminate seed clumping.
- ✓ Look for a unit that has a removable seed box to easily discard or save left over seed.
- ✓ Look for a seed box with a clear lid so you can see when they you are running out of seed in the hopper and can avoid dry walking.

### Bearings:

- ✓ The main blade shaft is the primary moving part on a seeder and will ultimately put strain on the bearings that are on either side of the shaft. Greasable cast iron bearings last longer, offer less down time, and require little maintenance.

### Versatility:

- ✓ Look for a seeder that is versatile for additional turf renovation applications. Some units can be converted from a seeder, to a vertical cutter, or dethatcher in minutes.



***A professional turf seeder can make quick work of seeding a new lawn or overseeding problem areas.***



***Consider a seeder that is versatile for additional turf renovation applications. Look for a unit that offers optional blade assemblies for dethatching and vertical cutting. (Dethatcher shown above w/optional catcher bag).***