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**Over-seeding Lawn in Autumn**

After stressful summer, lawn grasses in Wisconsin rejuvenate in autumn and it is considered one of the best times to seed, renovate and establish new lawns. Moderate temperatures in 70's and ample soil moisture in September promotes speedy establishment of lawn grasses. Summer annual weeds like crabgrass ends its life cycle in September and doesn't compete with the newly seeded grass.

The first step in lawn renovation is to identify the cause of lawn decline and assess the spread of damaged area. This year's summer heat and drought stress caused multiple bare patches, and thin lawns in southeast Wisconsin. Compacted soil, chinch bugs, shade, lack of fertility and diseases (necrotic ring spot, summer patch) can also further stress the grasses in summer months. Lawns with more than 50% desirable grasses, can be renovated by over-seeding bare patches. However, lawns that has more than 50% weeds or bare ground requires a complete renovation.



Following are some useful tips in over-seeding an established lawn:

1. Start by selecting right seed mix for the given site. For sunny areas, use 50-100% Kentucky bluegrass mix and for dry shaded sites use 50% or more with fine fescue mix.
2. Take control of perennial weed patches like creeping Charlie, by using broadleaf weed control product containing triclopyr as active ingredient. Follow the label directions for safety and direction. Schedule a second application at about 10-14 days interval for effective control.
3. Small bare patches are about the size of baseball may require some broadcasting with general lawn fertilizer (1lb of Nitrogen per 1000 square feet rate) to boost the surrounding turf grasses to fill in the voids.

4. To fix dead patches about the size of basketball, loosen the soil, sprinkle the right type of seeds by hand and rake the seeds gently to a depth of 1/4to 3/8 inch.
5. To over-seed larger areas or to improve turf density, rent a slit seeder from a local hardware store or garden centers. You can also seek service from professional lawn care companies to slit seed your lawn. Slit seeders make a small groove in the soil and deposit the seeds. The flap attached at the back end of the slit seeder covers the deposited seed with soil. Run the slit seeder at two perpendicular directions to each other using half the seeding rate to get a uniform dense lawn growth.
6. It is important to irrigate, mow and fertilize the over-seeded area for successful establishment. Keep the over-seeded area moist until it is established. Use a clean straw to mulch it lightly (one bale per 1000 square feet). Begin mowing when the seedlings reach 3 inches tall (takes about 3-6 weeks) and fertilize six weeks after germination with general lawn fertilizer.

*Written by Vijai Pandian, Horticulture Educator, Kenosha and Racine Counties*



As the growing season comes to end, it is helpful to clean and put your garden to bed for the winter. A good fall cleanup provides multiple benefits for gardeners – it reduces weed populations and

**Putting Your Garden to Bed for the Winter**

disease, minimizes plant insect pests, prevents rodent infestation, and eases the workload for next year's spring planting.

6. **Rake the garden beds to remove any final plant debris and stones, and level the garden soil.** If you have shredded fallen tree leaves, spread them evenly in your garden beds and till it to a shallow depth. Don't add lime or wood ash in your garden beds.
  7. **If you have not done a soil test before or in the last five years,** it is time to collect some random soil core samples from your garden beds and get it tested through UW soil and forage lab. Download the UW Madison Extension publication A2166 "Sampling lawn and garden soil for analysis" from [learningstore.extension.wisc.edu](https://learningstore.extension.wisc.edu) to read more about the proper procedure in collecting representative soil samples from your garden beds.
- A soil test can analyze your garden soil nutrient contents like potassium, phosphorus, pH, and organic matter.** The soil test report will also provide recommendations on how to improve your garden soil based on your test results. Contact your local county Extension office to know more about the pricing options for various soil testing services at UW soil and forage lab. You can also find the soil testing pricing options at <https://uwlab.soils.wisc.edu/fees/>
- Be kind to your gardening tools.** Properly cleaned and stored garden tools can help prevent the spread of diseases, weed seeds, insect and earthworm eggs, and prolong the shelf life of the equipment. Clean your garden shovels and hoes under running water and use a clean cloth to wipe the moisture and remaining dirt. Use coarse grade steel wool to remove rusty edges and wipe the tools with 70% rubbing alcohol disinfectant. Spray the metallic tools with WD-40 to prevent rust, and store the tools in a dry shed.

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<https://milwaukee.extension.wisc.edu/2019/10/30/putting-your-garden-to-bed-for-winter/>

Remove any dirt and debris sticking on those materials and if needed, rinse them with water. Remove any inorganic mulch materials like black plastic film from the bed, as they don't decompose and can potentially harbor insect pests.

1. **Before you begin to pull out the plants, harvest any leftover fruits/pods on your tomato, peppers, and bean plants.** Store only the mature fruits and discard any immature, rotten fruits in your compost pile. Late blight infected tomato fruits and potato tubers should be thrown away in the trash.
2. **Clean your garden during dry, sunny days in the late morning or afternoon hours.** While this is not always possible, it does make for a healthier garden. Pulling plants during rainy days or early morning hours can help spread disease spores in your garden, and walking on wet soil can ruin your garden soil structure.
3. **Pull out the garden labels, stakes, cages, and trellises from the garden beds.** Remove any dirt and debris sticking on those materials and if needed, rinse them with water. Remove any inorganic mulch materials like black plastic film from the bed, as they don't decompose and can potentially harbor insect pests.
4. **When cleaning garden beds, remove entire plants, including its main roots and fallen leaves from the ground.** Use a pruner to cut and remove the stalks of large size plants. As most fungal pathogens overwinter in the plant debris, it is best to bag and throw away severely infested tomato, potato, and pumpkin plant materials. The rest of the garden plants can be piled for composting.
5. **Know your cold and hot compost items.** Seed heads of any annual weed and rhizomes from perennial weeds should not be added into the cold compost pile. It is best to bag and place these items in the trash. Any other vegetative matter from the

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