

How to Plant Mayberry Ryegrass

Ryegrass is often used in northern climates due to its ability to tolerate cool temperatures, and is typically planted when other, more permanent grasses have died out for the year. Unlike other types of grass which often go dormant at the first frost, ryegrass can stay green and lush during the winter months. Properly and carefully planning your planting area, preparing your soil, and planting the ryegrass seeds can help you create a great crop of ryegrass.

In southern climates ryegrass is typically used to overseed permanent lawns in the fall. Ryegrass is also an inexpensive option for short-term erosion control.

1 Preparing Your Planting Area

1 Choose the right time of year.

It's crucial that you plant your ryegrass during the correct season so that it germinates properly. The air temperature should reach between 60 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit (16 to 24 degrees Celsius) during the day. It's best to plant rye seed when the temperatures reach that point but may begin to fall in a few weeks (planting rye seed before it starts getting hotter can cause the rye to die).

2 Choose the type of rye seed.

Rye seed comes in two versions – annual and perennial. The annual seed does not germinate as well as the perennial, which means you'll need to use more of the annual variety to get the same lush look you could achieve with the perennial. You also have the option of using sod, which is pre-grown patches of rye that you purchase from a nursery and then lay over your prepared planting area.

3 Fill in your soil as needed.

Whether you are seeding or sodding ryegrass, you'll need to fill in the existing soil so that it reaches the correct depth for your ryegrass - about 4 to 6 inches (9 to 12 cm). You can use topsoil to fill in low areas, but the composition should have less than 20% clay, and it should not contain any herbicides.

4 Add fertilizer to the soil.

This will give the soil the nutrients necessary for your ryegrass to grow well. Phosphorous and potassium fertilizer are your best options for use with ryegrass.

2 Seeding Ryegrass

1 Till the soil for new growth.

If you're planting rye seed on new soil, it needs to be tilled. This allows oxygen to get into the soil. It also breaks up clumps of soil, allowing the rye seed to germinate. Evenly till the soil to ensure even growth of your rye seed.

2 Mow the existing lawn if necessary.

This is crucial if you're growing ryegrass in an area that is a permanent lawn - that has other grasses or plant growth during other times of the year. Mowing the existing lawn as short as possible will give the rye seed more room to take to the ground.

3 Use more annual seed.

If you're using the annual variety of ryegrass seed, you'll need to spread more than you would with the perennial variety. You generally need 15 to 20 lbs (7 to 9 kgs) per 1000 square feet (9.5 square km) when you're using annual seed. Perennial seed should be spread at 10 lbs (5 kgs) per 1000 square feet. These amounts apply equally to overseeding an existing lawn and seeding new soil.

4 Divide the seed in half.

You should divide the amount of seed that you need to use in half. Spread one half of it in one direction, and then spread the second half of the seed perpendicular to your first planting direction. This will help ensure an even spread of your seed.

Depending on the size of your lawn, you may want to use either a push spreader or a hand spreader to spread the rye seed. Hand spreaders are typically used for small lawns that have large amounts of detail, while push spreaders may be best for larger lawns or new soil with larger open areas.

5 Rake the seed into the soil.

Using a metal rake, rake the seed into the soil to ensure most of it gets into the soil (rather than lying on top). Rake gently - you don't want to move the seed around too much, and you don't want to damage the soil.

If you're overseeding an existing lawn, it might be hard to rake the seed into the soil. If you can't rake an existing lawn, that's fine. The existing growth - even if it's short - should ensure the rye seed isn't disturbed.

6 Water the seeded area immediately.

Once you've spread the seed, water the seeded area until it's moist. This will soften up the soil and make it easier for the rye seed to take root. It will also help the rye seed sink into the soil.

3 Caring for Your Ryegrass

1 Water your lawn frequently.

Until the ryegrass takes root – about three days for sodded ryegrass and two weeks for seeded ryegrass – water your lawn two to three times a week. Your grass should be moist but not saturated. When puddles begin to appear after you water, you can cease watering regularly and proceed only as needed.

2 Apply a high nitrogen fertilizer.

Applying a fertilizer high in nitrogen helps the ryegrass grow. It's also great if you've overseeded an existing lawn and will be using it later to grow vegetables.

3 Mow your grass frequently.

Ryegrass grows very quickly, which means you'll need to mow your lawn a few times a week. You should set your mower blade to a high setting.

Tips

- Ryegrass is not perennial, and therefore must be planted each year.
- Ryegrass will reach the end of its growing season around the end of May. At this point, avoid watering the grass for a few days. This will allow the ryegrass to become dormant, and will aid in bringing about the permanent, summer grass.
- Like other types of grass, you must mow the ryegrass at least once a week during its growing season. Mowing the grass using the tallest setting on the mower provides the best results with this type of grass.
- Plant ryegrass near your legume garden to keep pests away from your legumes.

Warnings

- As ryegrass often grows in thin clusters, mowing it too short can make your lawn look uneven. Experiment with different lawn settings to find the look you like best.
- Ryegrass is best in areas that don't need to be weeded often, or where the existing plant life has a short growing season. Avoid planting it in flower beds.