

Overseeding our Bermuda lawns here in the desert southwest has become a standard landscape practice of ensuring year-long green grass. Because most people come to expect over-seeding, many of the negative aspects tend to get overlooked.

Typically, over-seeding starts in late September when Bermuda grass is actively growing. At that time, a combination of lowered cutting height and reduced watering to help slow the growth of the Bermuda. The Bermuda is then "scalped" to remove most of the green grass and expose the soil for seeding. The Bermuda is then forced to compete for water, nutrients and sun with the newly planted rye grass.

The results are the Bermuda grass being in a weaker health condition when entering winter dormancy in November. The following spring, still lacking energy from dormancy and again competing with the rye grass, the Bermuda now has difficulty re-establishing itself. The Bermuda will continue to struggle until after the rye dies out early to mid-summer even into July. This can be a large contributing factor to Bermuda turf decline.

This whole process means that the normal growing season for Bermuda of April through November (8 months +/- depending upon weather conditions) is now reduced to late June through September at best, just 3 - 4 months. This is not nearly enough time to provide for a healthy and vigorous strand of Bermuda grass in the summer.



This is an example of Bermuda Turf that is in a declined state. Turf is lacking Bermuda after Rye grass has died and typically may contain weeds, especially Spurge. This problem doesn't normally occur quickly, but can take a few years to occur. Utilizing proper turf management

practices (fertilization, soil amendments, aeration, proper mowing and allowing Bermuda to rest every few years) along with proper irrigation practices should allow these areas to fully recover.



Rye grass which has been over-seeded at a higher than acceptable rate can multiply the negative effects to the Bermuda grass which is extremely noticeable at transition time. This turf was seeded at a rate of 8 pounds of Rye seed per 1000 square feet which helps to reduce the amount of competition as the Bermuda starts to grow in the spring.

It is recommended that the Bermuda grass be allowed to "rest" from over-seeding every 3rd year. This will allow adequate time to better develop a healthy root system and to fill in bare or thin spots where Bermuda has not survived over-seeding in the past. Some of the additional benefits of not over-seeding Bermuda lawns:

- Reduced cost of seed and expenses for establishing new winter rye grass.
- Savings of irrigation water and associated costs because dormant Bermuda grass requires substantially less water.
- A stronger stand of Bermuda grass means fewer weed problems and less money spent on weed control chemicals.



Properly maintained Bermuda grass can be achieved by following proper practices and by giving it a rest every once in a while.