

RENOVATION OF A FESCUE LAWN AND IMPROVING YOUR YARD THIS FALL

submitted by Brad Vice, Carolina Land Consultants

The landscape treatment for Highland Creek is intended to be a unifying element in the design of the overall community. Highland Creek's Design Guidelines state that the homeowner is responsible for landscaping and maintaining all areas on their property as well as the portion on the street right of way between the property line and the street curb. Many residential properties throughout Highland Creek battle each year with intrusive Bermuda grass and numerous broadleaf weeds. Below are some recommendations on how to renovate and care for your fescue turf. It is important for you to take diligent steps in early fall to restore the health and attractiveness of your lawn.

Here are a few tips to remember in the most important time of the year for successful fescue turf care:

1. Start in Mid-August and start killing the invasive weeds. Use Round-up for Bermuda grass (2 applications, 2 weeks apart), or broadleaf weed killer for other noxious weeds.
2. Next, get a soil test. This is the highest recommendation we can give you. Have that completed by the end of August so you know what nutrients your soil and turf need.
3. Purchase "certified" blue tagged turf-type tall fescue. If you have an un-irrigated lawn, consider certified Kentucky 31 fescue, as it has a thicker blade of grass and is good in the hottest months. Certified means that the majority, about 98%, of the noxious weed seeds have been sifted out.
4. Figure that you will need 3-4 lbs of seed per 1000 sq ft of lawn. Most residential lawns are from 8,000 to 10,000 sq ft, so buy the 50lb bag. You can use the extra seed to hit the spots that did not germinate well. You can seed through the end of October successfully.
5. Apply 18-24-12, or similar, starter fertilizer when you aerate. This fertilizer lasts 4-6 weeks and helps the new seed germinate. Fertilize again 4-6 weeks later with a winterizing fertilizer that helps your turf do well and produce root growth over the winter.
6. Depending on your soil test, it is also a good time to lime. Some healthy lawns do not need to lime, as the soil ph is where it needs to be, between 6 & 7. Lime leaches into the soil layer very slowly, so the best time to apply is when the plugs have been removed from aeration. This helps the lime get down into the root zone quicker and more effectively. The only true way to determine if you need lime is to do a ph test of the soil. One, 40 lb bag of lime per 1000 sq ft of turf, will generally raise the ph about 1/2 point.
7. Either rent an aerator or find the guy coming down the street. Either way works well. The guy coming down the street will probably charge you \$40 - \$60 to aerate only. Have him do it in both directions and he will earn his money. Make sure that you flag all your irrigation valve boxes, irrigation heads and invisible fences before he starts. Remember, it is not his fault if he hits something he cannot see.
8. The seeding and fertilizing can be done by the contractor or you. It only takes 15 - 30 minutes to finish this part out, so it might be a lot more cost effective to do it yourself. Remember; follow the directions on the product label!!! If you are not sure how much to apply, hire it out. Just check to make sure they are using good products as mentioned above.
9. Finally, water. You have to keep the ground moist as soon as the seed gets wet. If you don't, then you have wasted a lot of time and money. Moist enough to walk on, but not soaked. You will need to keep up the watering for about two weeks and you should be okay.

Spring Tips to Remember:

First of March - apply fertilizer with pre-emergent herbicide (weed & feed)

First of May - apply a 2nd round of fertilizer with pre-emergent (low in nitrogen- the first # on the bag. This is very important- Two applications in the spring will keep crabgrass and other broadleaf weeds out of your lawn until August. Remember, you cannot seed once you apply pre-emergent. It is designed to keep seeds from germinating, even grass seed. Spray break-through weeds with a broadleaf weed killer you can find at most hardware stores.

