

# Lawn Renovation

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Compiled by Dorothy Kienke. *Information taken from "Lawn Care for the Inland Northwest", Washington State University/Spokane County Cooperative Extension.*

Faced with a lawn that has deteriorated over time or has been invaded with annual and perennial weeds, homeowners must decide what to do. Following proper methods greatly increases the likelihood of a successful renovation.

The simplest approach is to dethatch heavily in the spring, aerate compacted soil and fertilize the turf. However, if the condition of the lawn is bad enough, more drastic measures may be required. The following three methods are recommended:

- Lawn renovation by heavy thatching and over-seeding.
- Lawn renovation by killing turf and weeds with glyphosate and over-seeding.
- Lawn renovation by killing the turf and weeds, sod removal and treating the site as a new lawn.

## LAWN RENOVATION WITH THATCHING AND OVERSEEDING

This method is recommended if:

- Thatch is heavy.
- Desirable grasses have been crowded out. If weedy perennial grasses have invaded the area, they must be killed before renovation will be effective.
- Turf has been damaged by insects or disease.

This method of renovation is best done in the spring, giving the turf time to recover before fall:

- Mow the lawn at approximately 3/4 inch in height.
- Use a power rake to remove accumulated thatch. Most attachments for lawn mowers will not do an adequate job for this type of renovation. Go over the turf in two directions.
- Rake up debris and mow again at the same height.
- If turf looks very thin, reseed the lawn. Choose a grass seed best suited for the area and its use. Reseed in perpendicular directions at one-half the seeding rate for that seed.
- Maintain constant surface moisture for germination of newly applied seed.
- Remaining grass stems and crowns will soon begin to green up. Adjust lawn mower to recommended height and mow regularly even if turf is thin.
- Keep turf healthy by regular fertilizing, watering and mowing.

## LAWN RENOVATION USING GLYPHOSATE\* AND OVER-SEEDING

This method is recommended if:

- Turf is too sparse and weedy to over-seed successfully.
- Turf has been invaded by weedy perennial grasses such as bent grass or quack grass, etc.
- Thatch is less than two inches deep.
- It is not necessary to change grade or improve the underlying soil.

This procedure works best if done during the summer and reseeded by late August or early September:

- Do not mow. Water at least two times a week so that turf and weeds are growing vigorously and are tall enough for good herbicide coverage. Apply a glyphosate product when temperatures are above 60°F and no rain is predicted for 24 hours.
- Mix and apply herbicide according to the product label.
- Do not water for the next two to three days. Then water the lawn thoroughly so that glyphosate will move throughout the grass plants.
- After seven to ten days, mow the lawn as closely as possible. Remove clippings and discard.
- Rent a renovator or power rake. Set the machine so that it barely cuts into the soil. Go over the dead turf at different angles until seed contact with the soil is possible. This method does not damage tree and shrub

roots and sprinkler systems. Compost or discard plant debris (reserving some duff to use later as mulch over new seed).

- Work an all-purpose plant fertilizer into the soil with a garden rake. Apply at label rates for lawns.
- Over-seed at the recommended rate for the grass seed you have chosen.
- Water consistently to keep the top three to four inches of soil moist. This will prevent new seedlings from drying out.
- Mow when grass is two inches tall. Keep turf properly watered, fertilized and mowed.

\* Product names include:

Roundup

Finale

Kleenup (Ortho)

Knockout (Lilly Miller) *Do not* use Knockout II, which contains diquat.

LAWN RENOVATION BY KILLING THE TURF AND WEEDS, SOD REMOVAL AND TREATING THE SITE AS A NEW LAWN.

This is recommended when:

- Turf is very sparse.
- The underlying soil must be improved.
- Thatch is too thick to dethatch.
- Turf is mostly bent grass and hard-to-kill perennial weeds or weedy grasses.

This process takes approximately two months:

1. Do not mow lawn. Water at least twice a week until turf and weeds are growing vigorously and are tall enough for good herbicide coverage. Apply a glyphosate product when the temperature is above 60°F and no rain is predicted for 24 hours.
2. Mix and apply herbicide according to the product label.
3. Do not water for the next two to three days. Then water the lawn thoroughly so the glyphosate will move throughout the plants. Give turf and weeds seven to ten days to die. It may take longer in cool weather.
4. Remove sod by renting a sod cutter or by cutting into strips.
5. Rototill or spade soil. Try to remove any deep-rooted perennial weeds at this time. Rake out and discard coarse debris.
6. Amend soil with organic material for improved drainage if necessary. Add soil amendments and prepare as for a new lawn by grading and smoothing out.
7. Important: After rototilling, buried weed seeds will be brought to the surface and will germinate. Water as you would for a new lawn for three to four weeks. When
  - a. Newly emerged weeds are growing vigorously, apply a second application of glyphosate (steps 2). Then if few weeds emerge, spot kill or remove by hand.
8. At the end of seven to ten days, apply an all-purpose fertilizer at label rates for new lawns and work it into the top four to six inches of soil.
9. Sow seed at the rate for a new lawn and rake lightly, or install sod if preferred.
10. Water regularly, keeping the top two to three inches of soil moist to prevent new seedlings from drying out.
11. Mow when grass is two inches tall and encourage a good stand of grass with deep watering and regular applications of fertilizer.

Recommended Grass Seed for North Idaho Lawns:

Sun – 60% Ky. Bluegrass (a blend); 40% Perennial Rye

Part Shade – 40% Ky. Bluegrass; 40% Perennial Rye; 20% fine Fescue

Shade – 50% Perennial Rye; 50% Fine Fescue