

## 7.10 Permanent Seeding

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### Description

Perennial vegetation is established on areas that will not be re-disturbed for periods longer than 12 months. Permanent seeding includes site preparation, seedbed preparation, planting seed, mulching, irrigation and maintenance.

Permanent vegetation is used to stabilize soil, reduce erosion, prevent sediment pollution, reduce runoff by promoting infiltration, and provide stormwater quality benefits offered by dense grass cover.

### Conditions Where Practice Applies

Permanent seeding should be applied to:

- Any disturbed areas or portions of construction sites at final grade. Permanent seeding should not be delayed on any one portion of the site at final grade while construction on another portion of the site is being completed. Permanent seeding shall be completed in phases, if necessary.
- Areas subject to grading activities but will remain dormant for a year or more.

### Planning Considerations

Vegetation controls erosion by reducing the velocity and the volume of overland flow and protects bare soil surface from raindrop impact. A healthy, dense turf promotes infiltration and reduces the amount of runoff. The establishment of quality vegetation requires selection of the right plant materials for the site, adequate soil amendments, careful seedbed preparation, and maintenance.

**Soil Compaction**—Storm water quality and the amount of runoff both vary significantly with soil compaction. Non-compacted soils improve stormwater infiltration by promoting:

- dense vegetative growth;
- high soil infiltration & lower runoff rates;
- pollutant filtration, deposition & absorption; and
- beneficial biologic activity in the soil.

Construction activity creates highly compacted soils that restrict water infiltration and root growth. The best time for improving soil condition is during the establishment of permanent vegetation. It is highly recommended that subsoilers, plows, or other implements are specified as part of final seedbed preparation. Use discretion in slip-prone areas.

**Minimum Soil Conditions**—Vegetation cannot be expected to stabilize soil that is unstable due to its texture, structure, water movement or excessively steep slope. The following minimum soil conditions are needed for the establishment and maintenance of a long-lived vegetative cover. If these conditions cannot be met, see the standards and specifications for Topsoiling.

- Soils must include enough fine-grained material to hold at least a moderate amount of available moisture.
- The soil must be free from material that is toxic or otherwise harmful to plant growth.

## **Design Criteria**

See specifications for permanent seeding below.

## **Maintenance**

1. Expect emergence within 4 to 28 days after seeding, with legumes typically following grasses. Check permanent seedlings within 4 to 6 weeks after planting. Look for:
  - Vigorous seedlings;
  - Uniform ground surface coverage with at least 30% growth density;
  - Uniformity with legumes and grasses well intermixed;
  - Green, not yellow, leaves. Perennials should remain green throughout the summer, at least at the plant bases.
2. Permanent seeding shall not be considered established for at least 1 full year from the time of planting. Inspect the seeding for soil erosion or plant loss during this first year. Repair bare and sparse areas. Fill gullies. Re-fertilize, re-seed, and re-mulch if required. Consider no-till planting. A minimum of 70% growth density, based on a visual inspection, must exist for an adequate permanent vegetative planting.
  - If stand is inadequate or plant cover is patchy, identify the cause of failure and take corrective action: choice of plant materials, lime and fertilizer quantities, poor seedbed preparation, or weather. If vegetation fails to grow, have the soil tested to determine whether pH is in the correct range or nutrient deficiency is a problem.
  - Depending on stand conditions, repair with complete seedbed preparation, then over-seed or re-seed.
  - If it is the wrong time of year to plant desired species, over-seed with small grain cover crop to thicken the stand until timing is right to plant perennials or use temporary seeding. See Temporary Seeding standard.

3. Satisfactory establishment may require re-fertilizing the stand in the second growing season.
- Do not fertilize cool season grasses in late May through July (i.e. Kentucky Bluegrass, Orchardgrass, Perennial Ryegrass, Smooth Brome, Fescues, Timothy, Reed Canarygrass and Garrison Grass)
  - Grass that looks yellow may be nitrogen deficient. In lieu of a soil test, an application of 50 lbs. of N-P-K per acre in early spring will help cool season grasses compete against weeds or grow more successfully.
  - Do not use nitrogen fertilizer if the stand contains more than 20 percent legumes.
4. Long-term maintenance fertilization rates shall be established by following soil test recommendations or by using the rates shown in Table 2.

**Table 7.10.1 Maintenance for Permanent Seedings Fertilization and Mowing**

Mixture	Formula	Lbs./ Acre	Lbs./1,000 sq.ft.	Time	Mowing
Creeping Red Fescue Ryegrass Kentucky Bluegrass	10-10-10	500	12	Fall, yearly or as needed	Not closer than 3"
Tall Fescue	10-10-10	500	12		Not closer than 4"
Turf-type Fescue	10-10-10	500	12		
Crown Vetch Fescue	0-20-20	400	10	Spring, yearly following establishment and every 4-7 years thereafter	Do not mow
Flat Pea Fescue	0-20-20	400	10		Do not mow

Note: Following soil test recommendations is preferred to fertilizer rates shown above.

5. Consider mowing after plants reach a height of 6 to 8 inches. Mow grasses tall, at least 3 inches in height and minimize compaction during the mowing process. Vegetation on structural practices such as embankments and grass-lined channels need to be mowed only to prevent woody plants from invading the stand.

### **Common Problems / Concerns**

- Insufficient topsoil or inadequately tilled, limed, and/or fertilized seedbed - results in poor establishment of vegetation.
- Unsuitable species or seeding mixture - results in competition with the perennials.
- Nurse crop rate too high in the mixture - results in competition with the perennials.
- Seeding done at the wrong time of year - results in poor establishment of vegetation, also plant hardiness is significantly decreased.
- Mulch rate inadequate - results in poor germination and failure.

Specifications  
for  
**Permanent Seeding**

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### Site Preparation

1. Subsoiler, plow, or other implement shall be used to reduce soil compaction and allow maximum infiltration. (Maximizing infiltration will help control both runoff rate and water quality.) Subsoiling should be done when the soil moisture is low enough to allow the soil to crack or fracture. Subsoiling shall not be done on slip-prone areas where soil preparation should be limited to what is necessary for establishing vegetation.
2. The site shall be graded as needed to permit the use of conventional equipment for seedbed preparation and seeding.
3. Topsoil shall be applied where needed to establish vegetation.

### Seedbed Preparation

1. Lime—Agricultural ground limestone shall be applied to acid soil as recommended by a soil test. In lieu of a soil test, lime shall be applied at the rate of 100 pounds per 1,000-sq. ft. or 2 tons per acre.
2. Fertilizer—Fertilizer shall be applied as recommended by a soil test. In place of a soil test, fertilizer shall be applied at a rate of 25 pounds per 1,000-sq. ft. or 1000 pounds per acre of a 10-10-10 or 12-12-12 analyses.
3. The lime and fertilizer shall be worked into the soil with a disk harrow, spring-tooth harrow, or other suitable field implement to a depth of 3 inches. On sloping land, the soil shall be worked on the contour.

### Seeding Dates and Soil Conditions

Seeding should be done March 1 to May 31 or August 1 to September 30. If seeding occurs outside of the above-specified dates, additional mulch and irrigation may be required to ensure a minimum of 80% germination. Tillage for seedbed preparation should be done when the soil is dry enough to crumble and not form ribbons when compressed by hand. For winter seeding, see the following section on dormant seeding.

### Dormant Seedings

1. Seedings should not be made from October 1 through November 20. During this period, the seeds are likely to germinate but probably will not be able to survive the winter.
2. The following methods may be used for "Dormant Seeding":

- From October 1 through November 20, prepare the seedbed, add the required amounts of lime and fertilizer, then mulch and anchor. After November 20, and before March 15, broadcast the selected seed mixture. Increase the seeding rates by 50% for this type of seeding.
- From November 20 through March 15, when soil conditions permit, prepare the seedbed, lime and fertilize, apply the selected seed mixture, mulch and anchor. Increase the seeding rates by 50% for this type of seeding.
- Apply seed uniformly with a cyclone seeder, drill, cultipacker seeder, or hydro-seeder (slurry may include seed and fertilizer) on a firm, moist seedbed.
- Where feasible, except when a cultipacker type seeder is used, the seedbed should be firmed following seeding operations with a cultipacker, roller, or light drag. On sloping land, seeding operations should be on the contour where feasible.

### Mulching

1. Mulch material shall be applied immediately after seeding. Dormant seeding shall be mulched. 100% of the ground surface shall be covered with an approved material.
2. Materials
  - Straw—If straw is used it shall be unrotted small-grain straw applied at the rate of 2 tons per acre or 90 pounds (two to three bales) per 1,000-sq. ft. The mulch shall be spread uniformly by hand or mechanically applied so the soil surface is covered. For uniform distribution of hand-spread mulch, divide area into approximately 1,000-sq.-ft. sections and spread two 45-lb. bales of straw in each section.
  - Hydroseeders—If wood cellulose fiber is used, it shall be applied at 2,000 lb./ac. or 46 lb./1,000 sq. ft.
  - Other—Other acceptable mulches include rolled erosion control mattings or blankets applied according to manufacturer's recommendations or wood chips applied at 6 tons per acre.

### 3. Straw and Mulch Anchoring Methods

Straw mulch shall be anchored immediately to minimize loss by wind or water.

- **Mechanical**—A disk, crimper, or similar type tool shall be set straight to punch or anchor the mulch material into the soil. Straw mechanically anchored shall not be finely chopped but, generally, be left longer than 6 inches.
- **Mulch Netting**—Netting shall be used according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Netting may be necessary to hold mulch in place in areas of concentrated runoff and on critical slopes.
- **Asphalt Emulsion**—Asphalt shall be applied as recommended by the manufacture or at the rate of 160 gallons per acre.

- **Synthetic Binders**—Synthetic binders such as Acrylic DLR (Agri-Tac), DCA-70, Petroset, Terra Tack or equivalent may be used at rates specified by the manufacturer.
- **Wood Cellulose Fiber**—Wood cellulose fiber shall be applied at a net dry weight of 750 pounds per acre. The wood cellulose fiber shall be mixed with water with the mixture containing a maximum of 50 pounds cellulose per 100 gallons of water.

#### Irrigation

Permanent seeding shall include irrigation to establish vegetation during dry weather or on adverse site conditions, which require adequate moisture for seed germination and plant growth.

Irrigation rates shall be monitored to prevent erosion and damage to seeded areas from excessive runoff.

**Table 7.10.2 Permanent Seeding**

Seed Mix	Seeding Rate		Notes:
	Lbs./acre	Lbs./1,000 Sq. Feet	
<b>General Use</b>			
Creeping Red Fescue	20-40	1/2-1	For close mowing & for waterways with <2.0 ft/sec velocity
Domestic Ryegrass	10-20	1/4-1/2	
Kentucky Bluegrass	20-40	1/2-1	
Tall Fescue	40-50	1-1 1/4	
Turf-type (dwarf) Fescue	90	2 1/4	
<b>Steep Banks or Cut Slopes</b>			
Tall Fescue	40-50	1-1 1/4	
Crown Vetch	10-20	1/4-1/2	Do not seed later than August
Tall Fescue	20-30	1/2-3/4	
Flat Pea	20-25	1/2-3/4	Do not seed later than August
Tall Fescue	20-30	1/2-3/4	
<b>Road Ditches and Swales</b>			
Tall Fescue	40-50	1-1 1/4	
Turf-type (Dwarf) Fescue	90	2 1/4	
Kentucky Bluegrass	5	0.1	
<b>Lawns</b>			
Kentucky Bluegrass	100-120	2	
Perennial Ryegrass		2	
Kentucky Bluegrass	100-120	2	For shaded areas
Creeping Red Fescue		1-1/2	

Note: Other approved seed species may be substituted.