

Improving land with grass and forb SEED

Seed or seeding means the use of grass or forb seed or a mix of these. Forbs are non-grass and non-shrub plants like alfalfa or prairie flowers. There are many different reasons to plant these seeds



Seeding can help keep weeds from taking over an area.

including cutting down on weed problems, enhancing sites around new homes, and improving pastures. Each seeding project requires a different management approach due to a variety of factors that need to be considered. For example, species selection, timing, planting techniques,

and the goals of the project need to be taken into consideration before starting a seeding project.

Weed Problems

Seeding, in combination with weed spraying, will considerably reduce long-term weed control efforts. In disturbed areas that have been overtaken by weeds, it is a good practice to seed the area after spraying. The

chemical label will give directions on how soon to seed after spraying. After the chemical has killed the weeds, the dead, weedy vegetation must be removed before planting the new seed. Removing the dead material allows sunlight to reach the soil, assisting in seed germination. The desirable vegetation will compete with the weeds for moisture which will reduce future weed problems.

Pasture

Pasture seeding can increase the forage quantity and quality as well as reduce weed problems. If a pasture is grazed continuously all year, there will be no advantage in seeding the pasture. In this situation, eliminating grazing from the area for a year will often give existing grass a chance to come back without seeding, although it still may be worthwhile to seed a mix of species with higher nutritional values. If the pasture is seeded, grazing should stop for at least one full year and preferably two full growing seasons. Once the new vegetation is established, a rest-rotation grazing system which gives the vegetation a rest is very important to keep the vegetation healthy.

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Disturbed areas around new construction should be seeded to reduce weed infestation.

Disturbed areas

Establishing desirable vegetation in disturbed areas such as around new homes where construction has removed all vegetation will help reduce future weed problems. These disturbed areas will soon be inundated by weeds unless seed is planted to out-compete undesirable plants. This can be as simple as spreading a dry land seed mix in the disturbed area. Once established, weeds can be very difficult to eliminate.

When the area is ready to seed, the next step is to determine what type of seed mix to use, when to plant, and how to plant it.

Seed Selection

When selecting a seed mix that is going to work well, factors to consider include soil type, annual precipitation, and forage quality.

Soil type is an important factor to determine what plants will work in an area. For example, sandy, alkaline, and rocky soils will each have a different variety of plant species adapted to that soil. Annual precipitation for an area will determine how drought tolerant or water tolerant the species to be planted need to be. Grass species that have high nutritional values and good production rates should be used in pasture areas to increase forage quality and quantity.

Timing

Seeding can be done in the spring or fall but is usually more successful in the spring. Spring plantings allow plants to get well established before winter. If possible on smaller projects, a little supplemental irrigation will make a tremendous

difference getting the seed started, especially in dry years.

Planting

There are many different ways to get the seed into the ground. Some of the easier ways include broadcast seeding, harrowing, and raking. These methods are appropriate for small areas less than five acres. Broadcast seeding is simply spreading the seed on the ground without incorporating the seed into the soil. Broadcasting can be done with a push or hand-held lawn seeder or by throwing it out by hand. When broadcast seeding, double the recommended rate of seed distributed. Harrowing and raking are basically the same thing but at different scales. Harrows are ground-drag tractor implements that work like a rake but are for large areas. When seeding with a rake or harrow, go over the area to be seeded then broadcast the seed and rake the ground again. This method helps incorporate the seed into the soil to increase germination.

All of these methods allow seed to be incorporated into existing vegetation without destroying desirable vegetation. For larger projects, drilling will probably be more cost effective.

The seeding methods and recommendations that have been discussed are just the basics to assist in getting started. Contact a local Natural Resources Conservation Service, conservation district, or University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service office for assistance in seed selection and site-specific recommendations.



A harrow can be used like a rake to help incorporate seed into the soil.