

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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One of the best ways to improve the condition of your lawn is to pay close attention to the mowing height. Cool season grasses, like Kentucky bluegrass, grow best in the spring and fall. Extended hot and dry weather causes cool season grasses to go dormant. High temperature stresses in Kentucky bluegrass can be reduced by raising the mowing height. The extra leaf length provides additional shade to cool the crown of the plant. Longer grass blades result in deeper root development, improving its ability to withstand drought stress. The extra leaf area also increases the rate of the plant's food production. The recommended height for Kentucky bluegrass is two to two and one-half inches in the spring and fall and three inches in the summer.

For thin or bare spots in your lawn, you may want to overseed to improve its thickness. The best time to overseed or seed new is mid-August to mid-September. A late summer to early fall seeding has several advantages over spring seeding. The seeds of cool-season grasses germinate quickly in the warm soil of late summer, and the warm days and cool nights of early fall promote rapid turf grass growth. The growing grass also has less competition from weeds, as few weed seeds germinate in the fall. I have had great success establishing new seeding in the fall.

To increase the success of overseeding thin areas in your lawn, first determine what caused the thin grass (poor management, heat, drought, diseases, insects, etc.) and correct the problem before seeding. Next, prepare your site properly. For small areas, mow existing grass to a height of one and one-half to two inches. Rake the area, but be sure to break the soil surface and remove existing turf grass. Hand sow the seed and rake again to work the seed into the soil. It is important to have good seed to soil contact.

Once the grass is sown, it is important to keep the seedbed moist with light frequent water applications. Mow the lawn often to a height of one and one-half to two inches to reduce competition from established turf grass. As you mow the new seedlings, increase the mowing height gradually; the final mowing height should be three to three and one-half inches. Six weeks after germination, apply one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet to fertilize the lawn.

If you have questions about establishing grass in thin or bare areas, contact the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.