

Description

Temporary seeding can be used to stabilize disturbed areas that will be inactive for an extended period. Permanent seeding should be used to stabilize areas at final grade that will not be otherwise stabilized. Effective seeding includes preparation of a seedbed, selection of an appropriate seed mixture, proper planting techniques, and protection of the seeded area with mulch, geotextiles, or other appropriate measures.



Photograph TS/PS -1. Equipment used to drill seed. Photo courtesy of Douglas County.

Appropriate Uses

When the soil surface is disturbed and will remain inactive for an extended period (typically 30 days or longer), proactive stabilization measures should be implemented. If the inactive period is short-lived (on the order of two weeks), techniques such as surface roughening may be appropriate. For longer periods of inactivity, temporary seeding and mulching can provide effective erosion control. Permanent seeding should be used on finished areas that have not been otherwise stabilized.

Typically, local governments have their own seed mixes and timelines for seeding. Check jurisdictional requirements for seeding and temporary stabilization.

Design and Installation

Effective seeding requires proper seedbed preparation, selection of an appropriate seed mixture, use of appropriate seeding equipment to ensure proper coverage and density, and protection with mulch or fabric until plants are established.

The USDCM Volume 2 *Revegetation* Chapter contains detailed seed mix, soil preparations, and seeding and mulching recommendations that may be referenced to supplement this Fact Sheet.

Drill seeding is the preferred seeding method. Hydroseeding is not recommended except in areas where steep slopes prevent use of drill seeding equipment, and even in these instances it is preferable to hand seed and mulch. Some jurisdictions do not allow hydroseeding or hydromulching.

Seedbed Preparation

Prior to seeding, ensure that areas to be revegetated have soil conditions capable of supporting vegetation. Overlot grading can result in loss of topsoil, resulting in poor quality subsoils at the ground surface that have low nutrient value, little organic matter content, few soil microorganisms, rooting restrictions, and conditions less conducive to infiltration of precipitation. As a result, it is typically necessary to provide stockpiled topsoil, compost, or other

Temporary and Permanent Seeding	
Functions	
Erosion Control	Yes
Sediment Control	No
Site/Material Management	No

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soil amendments and rototill them into the soil to a depth of 6 inches or more.

Topsoil should be salvaged during grading operations for use and spread on areas to be revegetated later. Topsoil should be viewed as an important resource to be utilized for vegetation establishment, due to its water-holding capacity, structure, texture, organic matter content, biological activity, and nutrient content. The rooting depth of most native grasses in the semi-arid Denver metropolitan area is 6 to 18 inches. At a minimum, the upper 6 inches of topsoil should be stripped, stockpiled, and ultimately respread across areas that will be revegetated.

Where topsoil is not available, subsoils should be amended to provide an appropriate plant-growth medium. Organic matter, such as well digested compost, can be added to improve soil characteristics conducive to plant growth. Other treatments can be used to adjust soil pH conditions when needed. Soil testing, which is typically inexpensive, should be completed to determine and optimize the types and amounts of amendments that are required.

If the disturbed ground surface is compacted, rip or rototill the surface prior to placing topsoil. If adding compost to the existing soil surface, rototilling is necessary. Surface roughening will assist in placement of a stable topsoil layer on steeper slopes, and allow infiltration and root penetration to greater depth.

Prior to seeding, the soil surface should be rough and the seedbed should be firm, but neither too loose nor compacted. The upper layer of soil should be in a condition suitable for seeding at the proper depth and conducive to plant growth. Seed-to-soil contact is the key to good germination.

Seed Mix for Temporary Vegetation

To provide temporary vegetative cover on disturbed areas which will not be paved, built upon, or fully landscaped or worked for an extended period (typically 30 days or more), plant an annual grass appropriate for the time of planting and mulch the planted areas. Annual grasses suitable for the Denver metropolitan area are listed in Table TS/PS-1. These are to be considered only as general recommendations when specific design guidance for a particular site is not available. Local governments typically specify seed mixes appropriate for their jurisdiction.

Seed Mix for Permanent Revegetation

To provide vegetative cover on disturbed areas that have reached final grade, a perennial grass mix should be established. Permanent seeding should be performed promptly (typically within 14 days) after reaching final grade. Each site will have different characteristics and a landscape professional or the local jurisdiction should be contacted to determine the most suitable seed mix for a specific site. In lieu of a specific recommendation, one of the perennial grass mixes appropriate for site conditions and growth season listed in Table TS/PS-2 can be used. The pure live seed (PLS) rates of application recommended in these tables are considered to be absolute minimum rates for seed applied using proper drill-seeding equipment.

If desired for wildlife habitat or landscape diversity, shrubs such as rubber rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) and skunkbrush sumac (*Rhus trilobata*) could be added to the upland seedmixes at 0.25, 0.5 and 1 pound PLS/acre, respectively. In riparian zones, planting root stock of such species as American plum (*Prunus americana*), woods rose (*Rosa woodsii*), plains cottonwood (*Populus sargentii*), and willow (*Populus spp.*) may be considered. On non-topsoiled upland sites, a legume such as Ladak alfalfa at 1 pound PLS/acre can be included as a source of nitrogen for perennial grasses.

Seeding dates for the highest success probability of perennial species along the Front Range are generally in the spring from April through early May and in the fall after the first of September until the ground freezes. If the area is irrigated, seeding may occur in summer months, as well. See Table TS/PS-3 for appropriate seeding dates.

Table TS/PS-1. Minimum Drill Seeding Rates for Various Temporary Annual Grasses

Species ^a (Common name)	Growth Season ^b	Pounds of Pure Live Seed (PLS)/acre ^c	Planting Depth (inches)
1. Oats	Cool	35 - 50	1 - 2
2. Spring wheat	Cool	25 - 35	1 - 2
3. Spring barley	Cool	25 - 35	1 - 2
4. Annual ryegrass	Cool	10 - 15	½
5. Millet	Warm	3 - 15	½ - ¾
6. Sudangrass	Warm	5-10	½ - ¾
7. Sorghum	Warm	5-10	½ - ¾
8. Winter wheat	Cool	20-35	1 - 2
9. Winter barley	Cool	20-35	1 - 2
10. Winter rye	Cool	20-35	1 - 2
11. Triticale	Cool	25-40	1 - 2

^a Successful seeding of annual grass resulting in adequate plant growth will usually produce enough dead-plant residue to provide protection from wind and water erosion for an additional year. This assumes that the cover is not disturbed or mowed closer than 8 inches.

Hydraulic seeding may be substituted for drilling only where slopes are steeper than 3:1 or where access limitations exist. When hydraulic seeding is used, hydraulic mulching should be applied as a separate operation, when practical, to prevent the seeds from being encapsulated in the mulch.

^b See Table TS/PS-3 for seeding dates. Irrigation, if consistently applied, may extend the use of cool season species during the summer months.

^c Seeding rates should be doubled if seed is broadcast, or increased by 50 percent if done using a Brillion Drill or by hydraulic seeding.

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Table TS/PS-2. Minimum Drill Seeding Rates for Perennial Grasses

Common ^a Name	Botanical Name	Growth Season ^b	Growth Form	Seeds/ Pound	Pounds of PLS/acre
Alakali Soil Seed Mix					
Alkali sacaton	<i>Sporobolus airoides</i>	Cool	Bunch	1,750,000	0.25
Basin wildrye	<i>Elymus cinereus</i>	Cool	Bunch	165,000	2.5
Sodar streambank wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron riparium 'Sodar'</i>	Cool	Sod	170,000	2.5
Jose tall wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron elongatum 'Jose'</i>	Cool	Bunch	79,000	7.0
Arriba western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii 'Arriba'</i>	Cool	Sod	110,000	5.5
Total					17.75
Fertile Loamy Soil Seed Mix					
Ephriam crested wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron cristatum 'Ephriam'</i>	Cool	Sod	175,000	2.0
Dural hard fescue	<i>Festuca ovina 'duriuscula'</i>	Cool	Bunch	565,000	1.0
Lincoln smooth brome	<i>Bromus inermis leys 'Lincoln'</i>	Cool	Sod	130,000	3.0
Sodar streambank wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron riparium 'Sodar'</i>	Cool	Sod	170,000	2.5
Arriba western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii 'Arriba'</i>	Cool	Sod	110,000	7.0
Total					15.5
High Water Table Soil Seed Mix					
Meadow foxtail	<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Cool	Sod	900,000	0.5
Redtop	<i>Agrostis alba</i>	Warm	Open sod	5,000,000	0.25
Reed canarygrass	<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>	Cool	Sod	68,000	0.5
Lincoln smooth brome	<i>Bromus inermis leys 'Lincoln'</i>	Cool	Sod	130,000	3.0
Pathfinder switchgrass	<i>Panicum virgatum 'Pathfinder'</i>	Warm	Sod	389,000	1.0
Alkar tall wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron elongatum 'Alkar'</i>	Cool	Bunch	79,000	5.5
Total					10.75
Transition Turf Seed Mix^c					
Ruebens Canadian bluegrass	<i>Poa compressa 'Ruebens'</i>	Cool	Sod	2,500,000	0.5
Dural hard fescue	<i>Festuca ovina 'duriuscula'</i>	Cool	Bunch	565,000	1.0
Citation perennial ryegrass	<i>Lolium perenne 'Citation'</i>	Cool	Sod	247,000	3.0
Lincoln smooth brome	<i>Bromus inermis leys 'Lincoln'</i>	Cool	Sod	130,000	3.0
Total					7.5

Table TS/PS-2. Minimum Drill Seeding Rates for Perennial Grasses (cont.)

Common Name	Botanical Name	Growth Season ^b	Growth Form	Seeds/Pound	Pounds of PLS/acre
Sandy Soil Seed Mix					
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	Warm	Sod-forming bunchgrass	825,000	0.5
Camper little bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> 'Camper'	Warm	Bunch	240,000	1.0
Prairie sandreed	<i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i>	Warm	Open sod	274,000	1.0
Sand dropseed	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	Cool	Bunch	5,298,000	0.25
Vaughn sideoats grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i> 'Vaughn'	Warm	Sod	191,000	2.0
Arriba western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i> 'Arriba'	Cool	Sod	110,000	5.5
Total					10.25
Heavy Clay, Rocky Foothill Seed Mix					
Ephriam crested wheatgrass ^d	<i>Agropyron cristatum</i> 'Ephriam'	Cool	Sod	175,000	1.5
Oahe Intermediate wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron intermedium</i> 'Oahe'	Cool	Sod	115,000	5.5
Vaughn sideoats grama ^e	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i> 'Vaughn'	Warm	Sod	191,000	2.0
Lincoln smooth brome	<i>Bromus inermis</i> leys 'Lincoln'	Cool	Sod	130,000	3.0
Arriba western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i> 'Arriba'	Cool	Sod	110,000	5.5
Total					17.5
<p>^a All of the above seeding mixes and rates are based on drill seeding followed by crimped hay or straw mulch. These rates should be doubled if seed is broadcast and should be increased by 50 percent if the seeding is done using a Brillion Drill or is applied through hydraulic seeding. Hydraulic seeding may be substituted for drilling only where slopes are steeper than 3:1. If hydraulic seeding is used, hydraulic mulching should be done as a separate operation.</p> <p>^b See Table TS/PS-3 for seeding dates.</p> <p>^c If site is to be irrigated, the transition turf seed rates should be doubled.</p> <p>^d Crested wheatgrass should not be used on slopes steeper than 6H to 1V.</p> <p>^e Can substitute 0.5 lbs PLS of blue grama for the 2.0 lbs PLS of Vaughn sideoats grama.</p>					

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Table TS/PS-3. Seeding Dates for Annual and Perennial Grasses

Seeding Dates	Annual Grasses (Numbers in table reference species in Table TS/PS-1)		Perennial Grasses	
	Warm	Cool	Warm	Cool
January 1–March 15			✓	✓
March 16–April 30	4	1,2,3	✓	✓
May 1–May 15	4		✓	
May 16–June 30	4,5,6,7			
July 1–July 15	5,6,7			
July 16–August 31				
September 1–September 30		8,9,10,11		
October 1–December 31			✓	✓

Mulch

Cover seeded areas with mulch or an appropriate rolled erosion control product to promote establishment of vegetation. Anchor mulch by crimping, netting or use of a non-toxic tackifier. See the Mulching BMP Fact Sheet for additional guidance.

Maintenance and Removal

Monitor and observe seeded areas to identify areas of poor growth or areas that fail to germinate. Reseed and mulch these areas, as needed.

An area that has been permanently seeded should have a good stand of vegetation within one growing season if irrigated and within three growing seasons without irrigation in Colorado. Reseed portions of the site that fail to germinate or remain bare after the first growing season.

Seeded areas may require irrigation, particularly during extended dry periods. Targeted weed control may also be necessary.

Protect seeded areas from construction equipment and vehicle access.