

To Green or Not to Green

The high temperatures and high humidity of summer will soon give way to cooler days and nights. Fall is the season that many residents think about planting a winter lawn, the process known as overseeding. But sometimes a winter lawn is planted only for aesthetics and not for function.

Establishing a winter lawn is an involved process that includes mowing the existing Bermuda very low (scalping), and verticutting to remove excess stems and shoots. Then seed and fertilizer are applied in addition to spreading a layer of organic material over the area which must be kept constantly moist until germination. If this sounds like a lot of work, you're right! If you would rather not attempt this yourself or hire someone to do it for you, there is good news. You can allow your Bermuda lawn to rest or go dormant for the winter season. This will save you the costs of installation, maintenance and *water*.

Remember, Arizona is entering its ninth year of drought - a prolonged period of less than average precipitation. In our desert environment, drought is a recurring event that can last for up to 30 years! In response to this, the Town of Gilbert declared **Phase 1 Drought Status** and is required to reduce municipal water use by 5 percent.

In its continuing efforts towards effective water conservation measures, the Town will not be overseeding its parks and municipal turf areas again this year. For the third consecutive year, the Town's Water Conservation Department would like to encourage everyone to consider limiting, or forgoing, overseeding turf areas.

Together we can save millions of gallons of water and thousands of dollars by not overseeding. You will be rewarded with significant benefits, not only reduced water costs but lower costs associated with preparation and maintenance of winter lawns. You will also demonstrate community leadership with your responsible approach towards our water supply.

Before making your decision, consider the following reasons for not overseeding:

- **Save money** – The cost of seed, water and labor. Turf uses 60 percent more water per square foot than a low-water-use landscape.
- **Prevent difficulties** – The overseeding process (scalping, verticutting or power raking) can be very stressful on a Bermuda lawn. Most turf experts recommend allowing your lawn areas to 'rest' every three years. This allows the Bermuda to regain its vigor.
- **Save water** – Ryegrass seed needs copious amounts of water to germinate. Once established, ryegrass needs water every three to five days, whereas dormant Bermuda grass needs water only once a month. Over the four or five month winter lawn season, a homeowner with a 1,000-square-foot lawn could save nearly 19,000 gallons!
- **Save frustration** – Seed germination problems, fertilizer problems, disease problems, and irrigation problems are all possibilities when planting a winter lawn.
- **Set an example** – *We live in a desert and water is our most precious natural resource.*

"We're not asking you to save the World, Just a Little Water"