

how to grow lawns

Lawns are the centre point of most gardens and are often the first thing we notice when stepping onto a property. Nothing makes the neighbours green with envy or the kids happier than a well-maintained, lush, green lawn, and for many the smell of freshly cut grass brings back wonderful memories of summer.

Choosing the Right Grass

There are a few things to consider before you sow your new lawn; its function and your soil type. These determine the best types of grasses to grow. In terms of its function and use consider;

- Will children play on it regularly?
- Do you have pets?
- Are any sections used as a thoroughfare?
- Or will the lawn just be admired?

This usage will impact the type of grass you will need to grow. The kind of soil you have also plays a major part; is it free draining or waterlogged - you may need to improve the drainage prior to establishing a new lawn.

To create a durable and attractive lawn all year round it's a good idea to mix grass seeds, as some do well in summer and others do well in winter. The only time you would stick to one type of grass is in more shaded areas. Some grass seeds do better in various parts of NZ so talk to your local garden centre for guidance. They can advise the type of seeds that suit your needs and climate.

Preparing and Planting a New Lawn

Preparation is very important and is the key to successful seed germination.

- 1 Firstly check the site's drainage, make sure there are no wet spots. You also don't want the lawn to be too perfectly flat, ideally a slight angle of 1-2 degrees sloping away from the house/structures will let water drain and not puddle in the lawn.
- 2 Next spread copious amounts of **Daltons Premium Lawn Mix** which is specially blended to ensure an even spread and improves drainage and soil quality.
- 3 Where pre-existing soil is heavy clay, the depth of the new topsoil should be approximately 60-80mm above existing ground level. If the soil is of reasonable quality, a depth of 50-60mm should suffice. This topsoil will help the roots become established.
- 4 Rake, level and lightly compact soil prior to sowing your lawn seed. If there are indentations in pre-existing grounds, use a light roller to even it out.

“A successful lawn takes regular maintenance and fertilising. When repairing or planting a lawn, always leave it until autumn or spring when the soil is warmer as this makes grass seed germination more successful.”

When and How to Sow

- 1 Spring or autumn is the best time to sow your lawn or tackle any lawn problems. This is because the soil is warm and there is adequate rainfall to enable an even germination of the grass seed.
- 2 Sprinkle the seed in an even pattern walking away from the starting point so you are not standing on the seed.
- 3 Apply grass seed to the surface of the soil, do not cover with topsoil as the seed is very fine and will not germinate well if covered.
- 4 When sowing the initial grass seed hold back 15-20% of the seeds to allow for over-sowing if there are areas that have not germinated well.
- 5 Grass seed should germinate (depending on soil temperatures and moisture) 7-10 days after sowing.
- 6 When the newly emerged grass has reached 80mm high the first cut can be made. With successive cuts you can lower the mowers setting to eventually reach the grass height you desire.

Professional tips with Xanthe White



Ongoing Lawn Care

Mowing

When mowing your lawn it's a good idea to catch your clippings and remove them – add them to your compost bin in small and regular amounts, or work it into the existing soil in your flower or vegetable garden. Check your lawn mower blades are sharp to make the cut cleaner; otherwise they can tear out the grass and damage growth.

Feeding/Watering

The secret to lush green lawns is fertilising regularly and adequately with lawn fertiliser. Fertiliser lowers the PH of the soil which means the grass will grow better than the weeds!

On established lawns, apply **Daltons Premium Lawn Fertiliser** every 4-5 weeks from October until Christmas (do not fertilise over the hot summer months). Then begin applications again from late February to late April.

Avoid fertilising lawns when they are very new – don't start until they have a mature appearance. Water new lawns regularly where required to ensure the soil remains constantly moist and do not overwater.

Pests and Diseases

Generally lawns do not suffer from many diseases if they are well maintained and fertilised regularly, although there are a few issues that can cause frustration:

Weeds

Unfortunately the invasion of weeds is impossible to avoid as many of the fine weed seeds are blown onto the lawn by wind from neighbouring areas. However a lawn that is regularly cared for and fertilised should be dense enough in grass to significantly reduce weed infestation.

Patches in Lawns

Patches can be caused by a grass grub or a fungal disease, but it's also worth checking the lawn isn't being used as a public toilet by any animals in the neighbourhood, especially dogs.

To fix patchy grass, repair the infected areas in spring by removing grass and soil around the infected area (at least 15cm beyond it). Apply **Daltons Premium Lawn Patching Gold** which contains everything you need in one bag (seed, soil and fertiliser) to the area and lightly water (*see below*).



If patches are severe, another alternative, although extreme, is to start from scratch and replace the entire lawn in spring. To do this remove all existing grass and follow the *Preparing to Plant New Lawn* instructions above.



Gardening Terms Explained

Free draining soil

Soil that is light and well broken up. Water can penetrate the soil and drain without pooling.

Waterlogged soil

Soil where water builds up and is unable to drain away freely.

Over sow

To sow seed again where it has already been sown.

Products to try

Daltons Premium Lawn Soil

A blend of natural organic materials designed to support seed germination and grass growth. It is a consistent, nutrient rich, friable product that is used extensively by professional landscapers throughout New Zealand.

- 100% weed free – every batch is tested.
- Consistent – friable and easy to spread.
- Nutrient rich – for outstanding germination and growth.

Available in 30L bags.

Daltons Premium Lawn Fertiliser

Specifically blended for lawn and turf applications. The balanced formulation includes slow release Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium, with extra Iron (for strong, healthy, dark green turf). This provides complete nutrients for up to 12 weeks, resulting in a lush, strong and vigorous lawn.

- Feeds continuously for up to 12 weeks.
- For new and existing lawns.

Available in 8Kg and 3.5Kg bags.

Daltons Premium Lawn Patching Gold

4 in 1 lawn repair. This fast germinating, hardy lawn seed is blended from natural and renewable ingredients with added **Daltons Premium Lawn Fertiliser**.

- Expanding cellulose mulch granules enhance seed germination and moisture retention.
- Enhanced with natural seaweed extracts and wetting agent for improved growth and root establishment.
- Natural coir (coconut fibre) provides an instant seed bed and improved root development.

Available in 4L bags.

