



Nashville Aeration Co.

Let your lawn breathe.

Aeration & Seeding Guide

Before and after. Everything your lawn needs.

A simple, Nashville-specific plan to prep for your service and turn new seed into a thick, healthy tall fescue lawn — built on University of Tennessee Extension guidance.



- 1**
Cores come out
Hollow tines pull 2–3 inch plugs of soil, relieving the compaction common in Middle Tennessee clay.
- 2**
Seed drops in
Seed settles into the holes and loosened soil, getting the seed-to-soil contact it needs to sprout.
- 3**
Roots go deeper
Air, water and nutrients reach the root zone, so new and existing grass can root deeper.
- 4**
Plugs melt away
The cores left on top break down in 1–3 weeks, returning soil and organic matter to your lawn.

- 01**
Before your service
- 02**
Know your grass
- 03**
Recovery timeline
- 04**
Watering
- 05**
Mowing, leaves & weeds
- 06**
Feeding & year one
- 07**
At a glance

01 • Before your service

Ten minutes of prep. A noticeably better result.

Take care of these one to two days before your appointment. Moist soil and a clear, well-marked lawn let us pull deeper cores and put seed where it counts.



Water deeply 1–2 days before

Soak the lawn so it's moist several inches down — skip it if a good rain already did the job. Dry clay resists the tines; soggy soil smears. Aim for moist, not muddy.



Mow a little shorter

Optional, but it helps: mow to about 2½ inches and bag the clippings so seed can reach the soil. Never scalp it.



Flag what's underground

Put wire flags directly over sprinkler heads, valve boxes, shallow pipes and drains, low-voltage lighting, and septic lids and lines — anything less than about 4 inches deep.



Use flags, not spray paint

Flags stand up where our operator can see them from behind the machine. Paint disappears into the grass.



Locate invisible dog fences

Ask your fence provider to locate the boundary wire and flag it every 2–3 feet. These wires usually sit just inches below the surface.



Clear the lawn

Move toys, hoses, furniture, decorations, fallen branches and pet waste out of the way.



Unlock gates, keep pets in

Make sure we can get into every area, and let us know ahead of time about narrow gates or tight side yards.



Hold off on weed preventers

No crabgrass preventer, pre-emergent or “weed & feed” this fall. Most pre-emergents keep new grass seed from establishing and can last 12–16 weeks.



Pro tip: the screwdriver test

The night before, push a long screwdriver into the lawn in a few spots.

Slides in ~3 in.

You're ready.

Stops at 1 in.

Water more — the soil is too dry.

Water squishes up

Too wet. Let it drain before service.



Good to know

Tennessee 811 doesn't cover private lines. The free 811 service gets public utility lines marked, but not private ones. Sprinkler pipes, invisible fences, landscape lighting and wiring to sheds, pools or gate openers get flagged only if you flag them.

Have a lawn service? Tell them you're seeding so they skip pre-emergent this fall. And let us know about new sod, recent repairs, steep slopes, soft or wet spots, and septic drain fields.

02 · Know your grass

Fescue or Bermuda? It changes the plan.

Fall aeration and seeding is built for tall fescue — the grass UT Extension recommends for most Middle Tennessee home lawns. Bermuda and zoysia run on a different calendar.

COOL-SEASON

Tall fescue

In winter	Stays green
How it grows	In clumps. It doesn't spread to fill bare spots — that's why fall seeding matters.
Blades	Medium-wide and coarse
Light	Full sun to moderate shade
Aerate & seed	Late August – mid-October
Mow at	3–4 inches

WARM-SEASON

Bermuda & zoysia

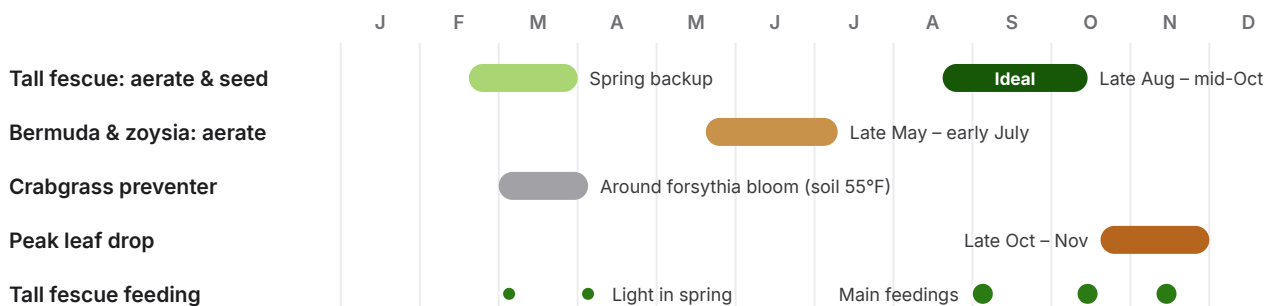
In winter	Turns tan after the first hard frost; greens up in spring
How it grows	Spreads by runners above and below ground
Blades	Fine (Bermuda) or dense and stiff (zoysia)
Light	Bermuda needs full sun; zoysia tolerates some shade
Aerate	Late May – early July
Fall fescue seed	Not recommended — you'll end up with a patchy, two-tone lawn



Seeing both? Many Nashville yards are a mix. If Bermuda covers more than about half of your lawn, talk with us before seeding fescue — choosing one grass is often the better long-term path.

The Nashville lawn calendar

Timing per UT Extension (W160-F, PB1576, D141, W146, W161-C)



Warm soil, cool air

Seed sprouts best when temperatures cycle between about 60 and 80°F — classic Nashville September and early October weather.

Two seasons to root

Fall-seeded grass roots through fall and again in spring before summer heat. UT notes spring seedings struggle more with heat and drought.

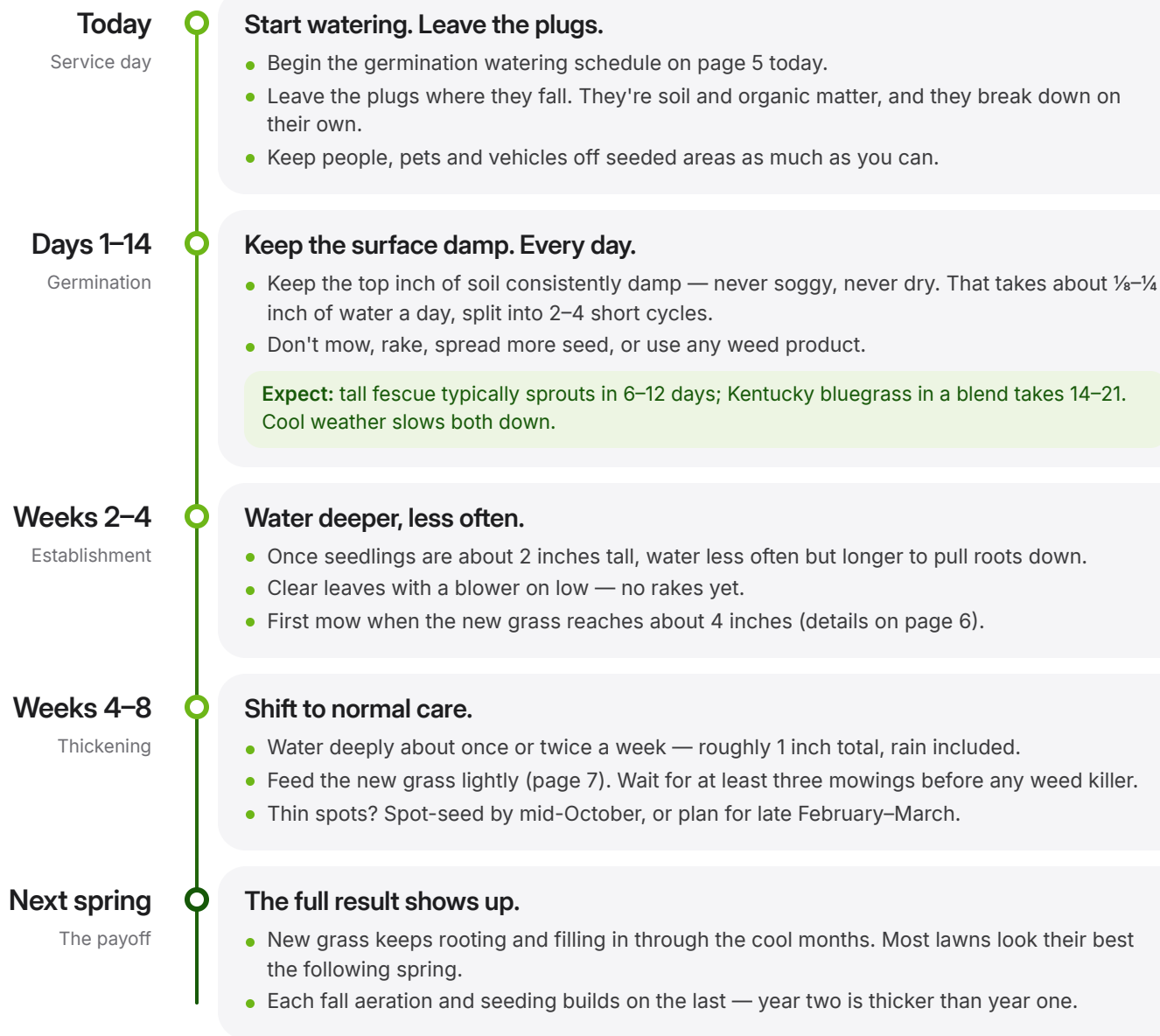
Less competition

Crabgrass dies back in fall. Spring seeding fights fresh crabgrass and can't be paired with a crabgrass preventer.

03 · After your service

Your recovery timeline.

What to do — and what to expect — from the day we leave until next spring.



What's normal

Plugs on the lawn

They stay 1–3 weeks. Rain, watering and mowing break them down.

Grass in tufts

Seed that lands in the holes sprouts in little clusters. They fill in.

Thin, light-green fuzz

New grass looks wispy at first, then thickens over several weeks.

A few bare spots

Shade, slopes and high-traffic areas are always slowest to fill.

Some weeds

Watering wakes up weed seed too. Thick grass crowds most of it out.

04 · Watering

Watering makes or breaks new seed.

Seed needs steady surface moisture to sprout, then deeper, less frequent water to root. The daily total matters more than the number of cycles.

PHASE	TARGET	HOW OFTEN	SPRAY HEADS*	ROTORS*
Days 1-14 Until most seed is up	⅛–¼ inch a day in total. Keep the top inch damp.	2 short cycles a day in cool, cloudy weather; 3–4 when hot, sunny or windy	5–10 min a day total e.g., 2 × 4 or 4 × 2	15–30 min a day total e.g., 2 × 12 or 4 × 6
Weeks 2–4 Seedlings about 2 in. tall	About ½ inch per watering, to pull roots deeper	Taper from daily to every 2–3 days	~20 min per ½ inch	~60 min per ½ inch
After 2–3 mowings Established	About 1 inch a week, rain included	½ inch once or twice a week. Skip it when the soil is still moist.	~20 min per ½ inch	~60 min per ½ inch

*Typical output: spray heads about 1½ in./hr, rotors about ½ in./hr. Rotating-stream nozzles on spray bodies (Hunter MP Rotator, Rain Bird R-VAN) run at about rotor speed — use the rotor column. The cup test gives your exact numbers. Targets: UT Extension W160-B and W161-F.

Pro tip: the cup test

- 1 Set 4–6 straight-sided cups or empty cans around one zone.
 - 2 Run that zone for exactly 15 minutes.
 - 3 Measure the average depth. ¼ inch in 15 minutes means that zone puts down 1 inch per hour.
- Repeat for each zone to set exact run times.

The daily touch test

Each afternoon, press a finger into a sunny spot and a shady spot.

Damp	Perfect. Keep going.
Dry, crusty top	Add a short cycle.
Puddles or mush	Cut back. Too much water washes seed and invites disease.

 **Water early, finish early.** Run the first cycle in the early morning and the last by mid-afternoon, so the grass dries before night. Leaves that stay wet overnight invite seedling disease.

 **Water by zone, not habit.** Sunny slopes and strips along driveways and sidewalks dry fastest. Shaded side yards stay wet. Adjust each zone on its own.

 **No sprinkler system?** A hose-end sprinkler on an inexpensive spigot timer works well. Overlap the spray patterns so no strip gets missed.

 **Count real rain, not forecasts.** A simple rain gauge settles it. About ¼ inch of rain can replace a day of germination watering; a passing sprinkle can't.

 **Cycle and soak on clay.** Nashville's heavy soils absorb water slowly. If you see runoff, split long runs into cycles of about 5 minutes (spray) or 15 minutes (rotors), about an hour apart.

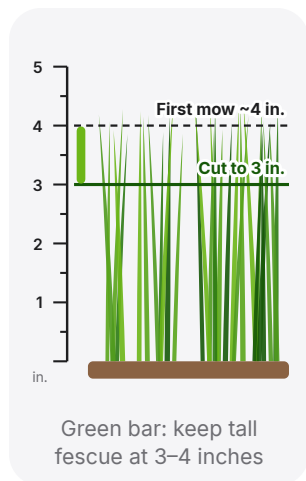
 **Don't stop at the first green fuzz.** Brand-new roots are shallow. Easing off too soon is one of the most common reasons new seed fails.

 **Watering requests and restrictions.** If your water utility asks customers to limit irrigation, follow its guidance and focus water on the newly seeded areas. Ask your utility whether hand-watering new seed is allowed.

05 · Mowing, leaves & weeds

Let it grow. Then mow it tall.

New grass needs time to root before it's mowed, walked on or treated.



Mowing new grass

- **First mow at about 4 inches**, usually 3–4 weeks after seeding, cutting back to 3 inches. Never remove more than a third of the blade at once.
- **Mow only when grass and soil are dry**, so tires don't rut the soil or pull up seedlings.
- **Sharpen the blade first**. Dull blades tear tender seedlings. UT Extension recommends sharpening at least once a year.
- **Go easy on turns**. For the first 2–3 mowings, use the lightest mower you have and make wide, gentle turns. Zero-turn pivots can rip out young grass.
- **Keep tall fescue at 3–4 inches** all year (UT's range is 2½–5). Taller grass shades out weeds and roots deeper. Mow at the higher end in shade and summer heat.
- **Leave the clippings**. They return nutrients to the soil. Just scatter any clumps.

Leaves: blow, don't rake

- Nashville's leaf drop peaks in late October and November — right when seedlings need sunlight.
- Don't let leaves sit and mat for more than a few days. They block light and smother young grass.
- Before the first mow, use a leaf blower on a low setting. Rake tines pull up seedlings.
- After the first mowing or two, mulch light leaf cover with your mower. Bag or blow off heavy layers — they won't mulch.

Weed control timing

Pre-emergent or crabgrass preventer

Not this fall
Not on seeded areas this fall.

Broadleaf weed killer or "weed & feed"

Wait
Until the new grass has been mowed at least 3 times. Follow the label.

Spring crabgrass preventer

Usually OK
On lawns seeded in September or October, applied on schedule in March. It also stops new seed — don't spot-seed those areas in spring.

Fall weeds like henbit and chickweed are normal after seeding. A thick lawn is the best long-term weed control.

Feet and paws

Keep play, pets and heavy traffic off seeded areas for about 3–4 weeks, until after the first mowing or two.

Patience before patching

Give seed 3–4 weeks before judging bare spots. Patch by mid-October, or wait for late February–March.

Shady spots

Grass thins in heavy shade; UT notes shady areas may need seeding every year. Mow higher and trim low limbs for light.

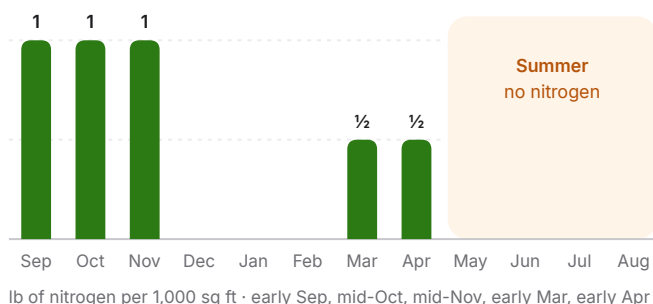
06 · Feeding & your first year

Feed in fall. Go light in spring. Skip summer.

Tall fescue does most of its growing — and most of its eating — in the cool months. UT Extension's feeding schedule follows that rhythm.

UT Extension tall fescue schedule

W161-C · PB1576



Using a lawn care service? Share your seeding date so they skip pre-emergent this fall and time feedings around your new grass.

Feeding new seedlings

Feed lightly 3–5 weeks after the seedlings come up — about 1/2 lb of nitrogen per 1,000 sq ft, per UT Extension.

Pro tip: read the bag

The first number is the percent nitrogen. Divide 100 by it to get pounds of product for 1 lb of nitrogen per 1,000 sq ft.

24-0-6 $100 \div 24 \approx 4.2$ lb of product per 1,000 sq ft = 1 lb of nitrogen

Never put down more than 1 lb of quick-release nitrogen at once, and skip feeding when the lawn is heat- or drought-stressed.



Test your soil for \$15

UT's Soil, Plant and Pest Center is right here in Nashville at the Ellington Agricultural Center. A basic nutrient test tells you your soil's pH and exactly which fertilizer and lime your lawn needs — so you stop guessing. Only add lime if the test calls for it.

UT Soil, Plant and Pest Center · 5201 Marchant Drive, Nashville, TN 37211 · 615-832-5850 · soilab.tennessee.edu · Fee per 2026 schedule.

- 1 Take soil from about 10 random spots, 6 inches deep.
- 2 Mix it together. Air-dry if wet (no heat). Send about 1 cup.
- 3 Get a sample box and form from your county Extension office — Davidson County: 615-862-5995 — or use a 4×7-inch bubble mailer.
- 4 Results are emailed with recommendations, usually within about a week.

Your first-year watch list

Brown patch

Hot, humid Nashville summers can bring tan, roughly circular patches to young fescue. Water early in the morning only, skip summer nitrogen, and keep mowing tall.

Bermuda creeping in

Bermuda spreads into fescue from beds and neighboring yards. A thick, tall-mowed lawn resists it best; UT schedules Bermuda control in fescue for July–August.

Plan next fall now

Fescue doesn't spread to fill gaps, so yearly fall aeration and seeding keeps it thick. Prime September dates fill up early.

07 · At a glance

Everything on one page.

Keep it on the fridge or next to your sprinkler controller.

Before we arrive

- ✓ Water deeply 1–2 days before — moist, not muddy
- ✓ Mow to about 2½ in. and bag clippings (optional)
- ✓ Flag sprinklers, valves, lighting, septic and shallow lines
- ✓ Have invisible fence wire flagged every 2–3 ft
- ✓ Clear the lawn, unlock gates, keep pets inside
- ✓ No pre-emergent or weed & feed this fall

After service

- Today** Start watering. Leave the plugs.
- Days 1–14** Top inch damp: 2–4 short cycles, ¼–½ in. a day total
- Weeks 2–4** Water deeper, less often. Blow leaves.
- ~4 inches** First mow, down to 3 in., sharp blade, dry grass
- Weeks 4–8** ~1 in. of water a week. Feed lightly.
- 3 mowings** Weed control is OK — follow the label

Avoid these mistakes

- ✗ Easing off water at the first green sprouts
- ✗ Puddles and runoff that wash seed away
- ✗ Letting leaves sit and mat on new grass
- ✗ Spreading more seed in the first 3–4 weeks
- ✗ Raking up or removing the plugs
- ✗ Mowing before the new grass reaches ~4 inches
- ✗ Pre-emergent or weed & feed on new seed
- ✗ Shutting off irrigation too early in a dry fall

Mow tall

Keep tall fescue at 3–4 inches year-round. It's the easiest weed control there is.

Feed in fall

Main feedings in September, October and November. Light in spring. None in summer.

Test your soil

\$15 at UT's lab in Nashville tells you exactly what your lawn needs.

Your lawn

Service date _____ Seed sprouting (6–12 days after) _____

Seeded areas _____ Target first mow (~3–4 weeks) _____

Guidance in this guide is based on University of Tennessee Extension publications PB1576, PB1903, PB1935, W160-B, W160-F, W161-C, W161-F, W161-I, W146, W205, W1068 and D141, the UT Soil, Plant and Pest Center, and Tennessee 811. Always follow product labels. Results vary with weather, shade, soil and care.



Questions? We're here to help.

Proudly serving Lenox Village, Nippers Corner, Antioch, Cane Ridge, Crieve Hall and nearby Brentwood and Nolensville.

nashvilleaeration.com

Request service at
nashvilleaeration.com/contact