



**Nashville Aeration Co.**

Let your lawn breathe.

Fall Lawn Guide · September–November

# Fall. The season that counts.

For Nashville's tall fescue lawns, fall is everything: core aeration and seeding, the main feedings, and the best weed control of the year. Bermuda and zoysia get ready for winter. Here's your September-to-November plan.



## Sept.

UT Extension's preferred month to core-aerate and overseed tall fescue. The ideal window runs late August to mid-October.

## 3

Main fescue feedings: early September, mid-October and mid-November.

## 6–12 days

How long tall fescue seed usually takes to sprout in good conditions.

## 01 • Month by month

# Fall, month by month.

Fescue grows and roots hard in cool weather. Bermuda and zoysia slow down and head into dormancy after the first frost.

## ● TALL FESCUE

## September

### Seeding season

- **Core-aerate and overseed.** September is UT's preferred month.
- **Feed** about 1 lb nitrogen per 1,000 sq ft in early September.
- Water new seed  $\frac{1}{8}$ – $\frac{1}{4}$  inch a day, split into 2–4 short cycles.
- No weed preventer on seeded areas.
- Check new seedlings for fall armyworms.

## October

### Establishment

- **Feed** about 1 lb nitrogen in mid-October.
- Spot-seed thin areas **by mid-October.**
- First mow of new grass at about 4 inches, cutting back to 3.
- Leaves start falling: blow or mulch them off new grass within a few days.
- Treat winter weeds and wild violets now. On new grass, wait until it's been mowed 3 times.

## November

### Wind-down

- **Last feeding:** about 1 lb nitrogen in mid-November.
- Keep leaves off. Mulch light layers with the mower and bag heavy ones.
- Keep mowing at 3–4 inches while it grows.
- Water new grass in dry spells. Don't shut off irrigation too early.

## ● BERMUDA &amp; ZOYSIA

- **Raise the mower about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch** in mid-September, before frost.
- **Bermuda:** optional light feeding ( $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$  lb nitrogen) mid-to-late September. **Zoysia:** no more nitrogen this year.
- Winter weed preventer for annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) once the soil is below 70°F, if it isn't down yet.
- Spring dead spot or large patch history? Fall is when fungicides work best. Follow the label.

- Growth slows as nights cool. **Stop mowing after frost** turns it dormant.
- Spread lime now if your soil test calls for it. UT calls fall an excellent time.
- Keep leaves from matting on the turf.

- Dormant and tan — that's normal.
- Treat green winter weeds on mild days.
- Keep leaves and debris off.



**Mind the first freeze.** Nashville's first fall freeze usually arrives between late October and mid-November. Finish fescue seeding by mid-October so new grass has time to root before cold weather.

## 02 · Aeration & seeding essentials

# Seed it right the first time.

The short version of our full Aeration & Seeding Guide. Ask us for the complete guide.



### Before we arrive

- **Water deeply 1–2 days before** so the soil is moist, not muddy. A screwdriver should push in about 3 inches.
- **Mow to about 2½ inches** and bag the clippings (optional, but it helps seed reach the soil).
- **Flag with wire flags, not paint:** sprinkler heads, valves, shallow pipes, lighting wires, septic lids and lines.
- **Invisible dog fence:** have the wire located and flagged every 2–3 feet.
- **Clear the lawn**, unlock gates and keep pets inside.
- **No crabgrass preventer or weed & feed this fall** — most stop grass seed for 12–16 weeks.

| AFTER SEEDING                                  | TARGET                                           | HOW OFTEN                                                                  | SPRAY HEADS*                                           | ROTORS*                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Days 1–14</b><br>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 | <b>5–10 min</b><br>a day total<br>e.g., 2 × 4 or 4 × 2 | <b>15–30 min</b><br>a day total<br>e.g., 2 × 12 or 4 × 6 |
| <b>Weeks 2–4</b><br>Seedlings about 2 in. tall | About ½ inch per watering                        | Taper from daily to every 2–3 days                                         | <b>~20 min</b>                                         | <b>~60 min</b>                                           |
| <b>After 2–3 mowings</b><br>Established        | About 1 inch a week, rain included               | ½ inch once or twice a week                                                | <b>~20 min</b><br>per ½ inch                           | <b>~60 min</b><br>per ½ inch                             |

\*Typical output: spray heads about 1½ in./hr, rotors about ½ in./hr. Rotating-stream nozzles (Hunter MP Rotator, Rain Bird R-VAN) run at about rotor speed. Water early and finish by mid-afternoon so grass dries before night. If water runs off, split runs into ~5-minute (spray) or ~15-minute (rotor) cycles about an hour apart.



### First mow & weed control

- Mow when the new grass reaches **about 4 inches**, usually 3–4 weeks after seeding. Cut back to 3 inches.
- Mow only when dry, with a sharp blade, and make wide, gentle turns.
- **No weed killer until the new grass has been mowed 3 times.**



### What's normal

- Plugs on the lawn for 1–3 weeks — leave them.
- Seedlings in little tufts from the holes, and thin, light-green fuzz at first.
- A few bare spots in shade and traffic areas. Full results show up next spring.

### 03 · Feeding, leaves & weeds

# Finish the year strong.



## Fall feeding

|                      |                                                                                      |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Tall fescue</b>   | About 1 lb nitrogen per 1,000 sq ft in early September, mid-October and mid-November |
| <b>New seedlings</b> | About ½ lb nitrogen, 3–5 weeks after they come up                                    |
| <b>Bermuda</b>       | Optional ½–¾ lb, mid-to-late September                                               |
| <b>Zoysia</b>        | None. Late-season nitrogen can encourage large patch.                                |

Test your soil first: UT's lab in Nashville runs a basic test for \$15. Lime only if the test calls for it.



## Leaves: blow, don't rake

- Nashville's leaf drop peaks in late October and November.
- Don't let leaves mat for more than a few days. They block light and smother young grass.
- On new grass, use a blower on low until it's been mowed. Rake tines pull up seedlings.
- Mulch light layers with the mower. Bag or blow off heavy ones.



## Fall is weed season

Henbit, chickweed and other winter weeds sprout in late summer and fall. UT notes fall treatments often work better than spring ones. Wild violet is also best treated in fall, and usually takes repeat treatments over more than one season. On newly seeded areas, wait until the grass has been mowed three times.



## Bermuda & zoysia go dormant

Raise the mower about ½ inch in mid-September. After the first frost — usually late October to mid-November in Nashville — stop mowing and let it rest. Tan, dormant grass is healthy. Keep leaves off and plan winter weed control.

## Avoid these fall mistakes

- ✗ Weed preventer where you're seeding
- ✗ Letting leaves mat on new grass
- ✗ Seeding fescue after mid-October
- ✗ Fertilizing zoysia in fall
- ✗ Easing off water at the first green sprouts
- ✗ Mowing new grass before it reaches ~4 inches
- ✗ Shutting off irrigation too early in a dry fall
- ✗ Raking up the aeration plugs

Based on University of Tennessee Extension publications PB1576, PB1903, PB1935, W160-B, W160-F, W161-C, W161-F, W203, W205, W807, W1359, D141 and the UT Soil, Plant and Pest Center. Always follow product labels.



## Questions? We're here to help.

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