



ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

Email or mail your questions to: info@sprigsandtwigs.net or
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Question of the Week: *I seeded my lawn this spring, but all that is growing is weeds. What happened and what can I do?*

Answer: Grass is fairly easy to grow, but it is particular. Most people tend to blame their seed if grass doesn't grow; most of the time that's not the problem at all. If you have seeded and re-seeded year after year, stop wasting your money and figure out the reason. Here are a few tips:

- 1)** Wait until fall to plant grass seed - In spite of what many people think, spring is a bad time of year to plant grass seed. The month of September is when seed should be planted. Grasses in our area are cool season plants which means they grow well in cooler weather; as summer approaches they slow down and go dormant until the fall when they resume rapid growth. Weeds, on the other hand, are warm season plants that behave just the opposite. As summer approaches, weeds grow more rapidly and almost always overtake the grass and dominate. So even with everything else correct, you will probably end up with weeds and not grass, whereas if you wait until September, you'll have success.
- 2)** Soil test before you do anything - Make sure your soil has the correct pH. Lawn grasses grow well in soils that are slightly acidic. Acidity is measured by pH; if your soil has a pH between 6.5-6.8, that's perfect. The farther away from that pH range your soil is the bigger problem you have. While the grass may germinate, it won't keep growing. pH is adjusted by lime (to raise it) or sulfur (to lower it). Always soil test before applying either lime or sulfur because soil tests will tell you what type and how much to apply.
- 3)** Always buy the most expensive seed on the shelf - high quality seed contains fewer weed seeds and less filler material - never buy bargain basement seed.
- 4)** Keep the soil and new seed moist and do not water at night. Once the grass germinates, keep watering, but let it dry off before nightfall or the grass can become diseased. If you forget to water and the soil dries out, your grass is doomed and weeds will take over. Once your grass reaches 4-5 inches, you can cut it for the first time, but water it deeply three times a week until it gets fully established.



From the picture you sent me, I see moss growing. Moss is a sign there is too much shade and too much moisture for grass to grow. There are a number of varieties of grass and some need more sunlight than others, but you still need hours of sunlight every day or grass will not thrive. If the grass seed package says 'shade seed' that does not mean that particular grass will grow in shade. It means that the seed can tolerate some shade and still thrive. In your case, if you really want to grow grass, you will need to thin (or remove) your trees to allow more sunlight in and dry up the excess moisture.

Ask the Landscape Professional" articles are all on our website; if you missed any, go to www.SprigsandTwigs.net

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Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 19 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..

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