

## STARTING A NEW “GREEN CARPET”

by Melanie Wright

Spring is here and you are tired of looking out your window at the dirt and mud surrounding your home. You can't wait to have that beautiful green carpet beckoning you outdoors this summer. Well, you can have that lawn you always dreamed of if you follow these simple steps.

- 1) You should begin with a level surface that is free of stones and rubble. Apply a layer of good-quality topsoil which is free of weeds and weed seeds. Topsoil is available by the truckload or by the bag, depending on the scale of your yard.
- 2) Apply a lawn grass seed mix that is suitable to the area. Sunny mix for full-sun areas, a combined mix for a sun/shade areas, and a specific shade mix for shaded areas. Most mixes should contain bluegrass, fescues and ryegrasses. The bluegrass percentage will be higher in a good-quality seed. Look for perennial, turf-type ryegrasses that are endophyte-enhanced (endophytes are a beneficial fungus that insects find repulsive.) Perennial ryegrasses are superior to annual ryegrass, not only because they survive the winter, but because they produce a fine, deep-green blade unlike annual ryes that are coarser bladed and are a lighter green colour. Fescues are hardier grasses that can withstand extremes in temperature and climate.
- 3) Apply the seed at a rate of 1 lb. of seed to 200 square feet of lawn. A cyclone grass seeder applies at a more even rate, but doing it by hand is just fine too.
- 4) Once the seed has been spread, don't bury it with soil. The seed doesn't like to be buried but likes to be in good contact with the soil. To do that, run a fan rake gently through the seed to make the seed come into close contact with the soil. After the raking, tramp it down by foot or roll it with a lawn roller to press it firmly into the soil.
- 5) The newly seeded area needs to be kept moist but not soaking wet until germination. Gently sprinkle the area with water, avoiding over-watering that causes the seed to float and run away.
- 6) Germination, under ideal weather conditions, should take place within a week to ten days. The ryegrasses will be the first to emerge, followed by the bluegrass by the third to fourth week.
- 7) It is non-essential to fertilize the seed at planting, but you should wait until after the first mowing to apply a high nitrogen fertilizer. Apply at the rates recommended on the bag, preferably with a slow-release formula to give your lawn that long-lasting “green carpet” look.
- 8) Enjoy!