

Is your summer Bermuda grass sparse or weak this year? If you overseed with Ryegrass every year, that may be the culprit.

Here in the Valley, we have temperate winters, which create excellent conditions for winter Ryegrass to thrive. However, refraining from overseeding every year has many vital benefits for your Bermuda grass. Mainly, this helps your Bermuda catch a much-needed break!

At DLC, we recommend suspending the overseeding process periodically – for at least one season – to help your Bermuda recover.

Fall Overseeding Disrupts Dormancy Preparation

Much like a bear preparing for hibernation, Bermuda spends the weeks and months before the cold season storing reserves to keep its roots and stems alive through the winter. Overseeding interrupts this process, and die-back often results in the root system over time.

The Result in Springtime

You can see the effects of interrupting this process in the spring when weather conditions are right for Bermuda to begin growing again. The thick, tall Ryegrass keeps the Bermuda shaded and cool, which prolongs its dormancy period.

By keeping the Bermuda dormant longer, the percentage of Bermuda that runs out of food before it can begin to photosynthesize increases.

When the Bermuda does come out of dormancy, it must contend with Ryegrass for nutrients while the Ryegrass is at its strongest. Ryegrass is a fierce competitor for all the resources required for Bermuda to grow, i.e., sunlight, water, nutrients. Bermuda and Ryegrass even compete for oxygen!



Then during early spring, Bermuda is at a disadvantage when it needs to build strength for the upcoming Arizona heat. By mid-summer, the Ryegrass dies out, and those dead grass blades can litter the turf and prevent necessary resources from reaching the soil. The Bermuda can seriously suffer as a result!

Dethatching is the best response to clearing dead Ryegrass, but this process can further stress or injure the Bermuda. In many overseeded lawns, Bermuda does not get the valuable time needed to recover because overseeding starts again in a few short weeks.



Dethatching in progress





Consider Doing This Instead

If you chose to leave your lawn dormant this year, excellent! Your Bermuda will thank you as it recedes into dormancy and builds up reserves. During the winter, here are some simple practices to prepare your lawn for the next warm season:

- Mow twice monthly to maintain a clean appearance
- Control any weeds
- Fill in any holes or compacted areas with soil

What to Expect When Spring Arrives

Around the middle to the end of March, when nighttime temperatures are consistently above 60°, the Bermuda starts to awaken from dormancy. This is when you'll need to resume a regular mow and care cycle.

But wait! There's more. It should come as no surprise that skipping overseeding means significant savings! By not overseeding, you can save money, effort, and time. To learn more, check out this article from the City of Mesa: www.mesaaz.gov/EnvironmentSustainability/WaterConservation/SkipOverseeding.



Bermuda in an area that was overseeded (2022)



The same area after Bermuda was left dormant (2023)



Properly maintained dormant Bermuda

