

Description

Temporary seeding can be used to stabilize disturbed areas that will be inactive for an extended period. Permanent seeding should be used to stabilize areas at final grade that will not be otherwise stabilized. Effective seeding includes preparing a seedbed, selecting an appropriate seed mixture, using proper planting techniques, and protecting the seeded area with mulch, geotextiles, or other appropriate measures.



Photograph TS/PS -1. Equipment used to drill seed. Photo courtesy of Douglas County.

Appropriate Uses

When the soil surface is disturbed and will remain inactive for an extended period (typically determined by local government requirements), proactive stabilization measures, including planting a temporary seed mix, should be implemented. If the inactive period is short-lived (on the order of two weeks), techniques such as surface roughening may be appropriate. For longer periods of inactivity of up to one year, temporary seeding and mulching can provide effective erosion control. Permanent seeding should be used on finished areas that have not been otherwise stabilized.

The USDCM Volume 2 *Revegetation* Chapter contains suggested annual grains and native seed mixes to use for temporary seeding. Alternatively, local governments may have their own seed mixes and timelines for seeding. Check jurisdictional requirements for seeding and temporary stabilization.

Design and Installation

Effective seeding requires proper seedbed preparation, selecting an appropriate seed mixture, using appropriate seeding equipment to ensure proper coverage and density, and protecting seeded areas with mulch or fabric until plants are established.

The USDCM Volume 2 *Revegetation* Chapter contains detailed seed mixes, soil preparation practices, and seeding and mulching recommendations that should be referenced to supplement this Fact Sheet.

Drill seeding is the preferred seeding method. Hydroseeding is not recommended except in areas where steep slopes prevent use of drill seeding equipment, and even in these instances it is preferable to hand seed and mulch. Some jurisdictions do not allow hydroseeding or hydromulching.

Seedbed Preparation

Prior to seeding, ensure that areas to be revegetated have soil conditions capable of supporting vegetation. Overlot grading can result in loss of topsoil and compaction, resulting in poor quality subsoils at the ground surface that

Temporary and Permanent Seeding	
Functions	
Erosion Control	Yes
Sediment Control	No
Site/Material Management	No

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have low nutrient value, little organic matter content, few soil microorganisms, rooting restrictions, and conditions less conducive to infiltration of precipitation. As a result, it is typically necessary to provide stockpiled topsoil, compost, or other soil amendments and rototill them into the soil to a depth of 6 inches or more.

Topsoil should be salvaged during grading operations for use and spread on areas to be revegetated later. Topsoil should be viewed as an important resource to be utilized for vegetation establishment, due to its water-holding capacity, structure, texture, organic matter content, biological activity, and nutrient content. The rooting depth of most native grasses in the semi-arid Denver metropolitan area is 6 to 18 inches. If present, at a minimum of the upper 6 inches of topsoil should be stripped, stockpiled, and ultimately respread across areas that will be revegetated.

Where topsoil is not available, subsoils should be amended to provide an appropriate plant-growth medium. Organic matter, such as well digested compost, can be added to improve soil characteristics conducive to plant growth. Other treatments can be used to adjust soil pH conditions when needed. Soil testing, which is typically inexpensive, should be completed to determine and optimize the types and amounts of amendments that are required.

If the disturbed ground surface is compacted, rip or rototill the upper 12 inches of the surface prior to placing topsoil. If adding compost to the existing soil surface, rototilling is necessary. Surface roughening will assist in placing a stable topsoil layer on steeper slopes, and allow infiltration and root penetration to greater depth. Topsoil should not be placed when either the salvaged topsoil or receiving ground are frozen or snow covered.

Prior to seeding, the soil surface should be rough and the seedbed should be firm, but neither too loose nor compacted. The upper layer of soil should be in a condition suitable for seeding at the proper depth and conducive to plant growth. Seed-to-soil contact is the key to good germination.

Refer to MHFD's Topsoil Management Guidance for detailed information on topsoil assessment, design, and construction.

Temporary Vegetation

To provide temporary vegetative cover on disturbed areas which will not be paved, built upon, or fully landscaped or worked for an extended period (typically 30 days or more), plant an annual grass appropriate for the time of planting and mulch the planted areas. Temporary grain seed mixes suitable for the Denver metropolitan area are listed in Table TS/PS-1. Native temporary seed mixes are provided in USDCM Volume 2, Chapter 13, Appendix A. These are to be considered only as general recommendations when specific design guidance for a particular site is not available. Local governments typically specify seed mixes appropriate for their jurisdiction.

Permanent Revegetation

To provide vegetative cover on disturbed areas that have reached final grade, a perennial grass mix should be established. Permanent seeding should be performed promptly (typically within 14 days) after reaching final grade. Each site will have different characteristics and a landscape professional or the local jurisdiction should be contacted to determine the most suitable seed mix for a specific site. In lieu of a specific recommendation, one of the perennial grass mixes appropriate for site conditions and growth season listed in seed mix tables in the USDCM Volume 2 *Revegetation* Chapter can be used. The pure live seed (PLS) rates of application recommended in these tables are considered to be absolute minimum rates for seed applied using proper drill-seeding equipment. These are to be considered only as general

recommendations when specific design guidance for a particular site is not available. Local governments typically specify seed mixes appropriate for their jurisdiction.

If desired for wildlife habitat or landscape diversity, shrubs such as rubber rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) and skunkbrush sumac (*Rhus trilobata*) could be added to the upland seed mixes at 0.25, 0.5 and 1 pound PLS/acre, respectively. In riparian zones, planting root stock of such species as American plum (*Prunus americana*), woods rose (*Rosa woodsii*), plains cottonwood (*Populus sargentii*), and willow (*Salix spp.*) may be considered. On non-topsoiled upland sites, a legume such as Ladak alfalfa at 1 pound PLS/acre can be included as a source of nitrogen for perennial grasses.

Timing of seeding is an important aspect of the revegetation process. For upland and riparian areas on the Colorado Front Range, the suitable timing for seeding is from October through May. The most favorable time to plant non-irrigated areas is during the fall, so that seed can take advantage of winter and spring moisture. Seed should not be planted if the soil is frozen, snow covered, or wet.

Seeding dates for the highest success probability of perennial species along the Front Range are generally in the spring from April through early May and in the fall after the first of September until the ground freezes. If the area is irrigated, seeding may occur in summer months, as well. See Table TS/PS-2 for appropriate seeding dates.

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Table TS/PS-1. Minimum Drill Seeding Rates for Various Temporary Annual Grasses

Species ^a (Common name)	Growth Season ^b	Pounds of Pure Live Seed (PLS)/acre ^c	Planting Depth (inches)
1. Oats	Cool	35 - 50	1 - 2
2. Spring wheat	Cool	25 - 35	1 - 2
3. Spring barley	Cool	25 - 35	1 - 2
4. Annual ryegrass	Cool	10 - 15	½
5. Millet	Warm	3 - 15	½ - ¾
6. Winter wheat	Cool	20-35	1 - 2
7. Winter barley	Cool	20-35	1 - 2
8. Winter rye	Cool	20-35	1 - 2
9. Triticale	Cool	25-40	1 - 2

^a Successful seeding of annual grass resulting in adequate plant growth will usually produce enough dead-plant residue to provide protection from wind and water erosion for an additional year. This assumes that the cover is not disturbed or mowed closer than 8 inches.

Hydraulic seeding may be substituted for drilling only where slopes are steeper than 3:1 or where access limitations exist. When hydraulic seeding is used, hydraulic mulching should be applied as a separate operation, when practical, to prevent the seeds from being encapsulated in the mulch.

^b See Table TS/PS-2 for seeding dates. Irrigation, if consistently applied, may extend the use of cool season species during the summer months.

^c Seeding rates should be doubled if seed is broadcast, or increased by 50 percent if done using a Brillion Drill or by hydraulic seeding.

Table TS/PS-2. Seeding Dates for Annual and Perennial Grasses

Seeding Dates	Annual Grasses (Numbers in table reference species in Table TS/PS-1)		Perennial Grasses	
	Warm	Cool	Warm	Cool
January 1–March 15			✓	✓
March 16–April 30		1,2,3	✓	✓
May 1–May 15			✓	
May 16–June 30	5			
July 1–July 15	5			
July 16–August 31				
September 1–September 30		6, 7, 8, 9		
October 1–December 31			✓	✓

Mulch

Cover seeded areas with mulch or an appropriate rolled erosion control product to promote establishment of vegetation. Anchor mulch by crimping, netting or use of a non-toxic tackifier. See the USDCM Volume 2 *Revegetation* Chapter and Volume 3 Mulching BMP Fact Sheet (EC-04) for additional guidance.

Maintenance and Removal

Monitor and observe seeded areas to identify areas of poor growth or areas that fail to germinate. Reseed and mulch these areas, as needed.

If a temporary annual seed was planted, the area should be reseeded with the desired perennial mix when there will be no further work in the area. To minimize competition between annual and perennial species, the annual mix needs time to mature and die before seeding the perennial mix. To increase success of the perennial mix, it should be seeded during the appropriate seeding dates the second year after the temporary annual mix was seeded. Alternatively, if this timeline is not feasible, the annual mix seed heads should be removed and then the area seeded with the perennial mix.

An area that has been permanently seeded should have a good stand of vegetation within one growing season if irrigated and within three growing seasons without irrigation in Colorado. Reseed portions of the site that fail to germinate or remain bare after the first growing season.

Seeded areas may require irrigation, particularly during extended dry periods. Targeted weed control may also be necessary.

Protect seeded areas from construction equipment and vehicle access.