

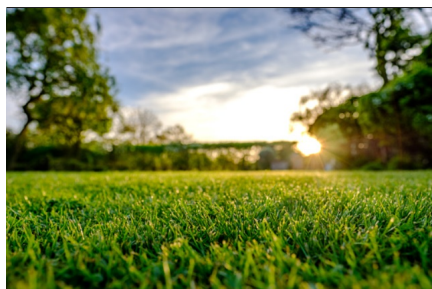
Tips for Winterizing Your Yard in Phoenix

Written by Linda Lee Ruzicka

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Keeping your lawn green in the southwest over winter isn't always easy. But with these tips, you'll be having as beautiful a lawn in the winter as you do in the summer months.



Why winterize?

Because Phoenix is in the 5a-7b [Hardiness Zone](#), it's important to [winterize](#) your grass. In the winter, grass faces the challenges of survival, and only the hardiest will make it through the winter to spring. By mixing cold and warm weather grasses though, your lawn will have a better chance of staying beautiful. Plus, by overseeding your lawn with perennial ryegrass, you'll have a lovely dark green lawn all through the winter.

How to winterize your lawn

You'll want to winterize your Phoenix lawn by [planting ryegrass](#), which is a good winter grass, for overseeding is usually around the third week of October. This is when the temperatures in the day are between 80 to 85 degrees and about 55 degrees in the night. It needs to be planted at the perfect time, not too early and not too late, so the best performance is achieved by the grass.

Once you've decided your planting date, then the tips below can be followed for a healthy lawn through the winter months:

At 25 days before your decided planting date, stop using fertilizer. This is especially true if it's one that's high in nitrogen. If not, you'll encourage plant growth which isn't what you want from your warm weather grasses in the lawn.

At 10 days from when you're going to plant, start to decrease your lawn's watering. You can either cut your cycle of watering by two-thirds or skip every third day's watering. Also, at this stage, increase the height of your mower by 35% as you keep a regular mowing schedule.

Then three days before planting your ryegrass, you will need to verticut your lawn by cutting it between 40 to 50 % of the normal height. Verticut or vertical mowing is an important step in the process and is also called scalping. It ensures the seeds reach the soil by getting rid of the long grass. Also, you may need to lower your mower on another pass over of the lawn and cut your grass again to get your lawn to the right height. Be sure to remove all the clippings and do a cleanup of any debris.

Vertical mowing will remove the buildup of thatch in the lawn so that your turf can breathe easier. This will also allow your turf to soak in moisture and absorb needed nutrients. Thatch is the buildup of roots and dead stems which forms between the soil and the grass.

One day before planting, you will need to rake the ground in your yard lightly with a springtime rake. This will scratch up any remaining thatch and stand up the stolons. This is done so that the rye seed can reach the soil.

The day of planting you broadcast the ryegrass 10 to 15 pounds per 1000 square feet of your yard. If you want the best coverage, then divide your lawn into two sections and apply the seed in a perpendicular direction. Rake your ground after the application so that the seeds are sure to make contact with the soil. Then apply a ¼ inch of mulch on top of the freshly sown seeds. This is so that the new seedlings will be protected from temperature conditions and adverse moisture.

Plus, you'll need to set your sprinklers to run for 10 to 12 minutes about 3 to 4 times a day. Once the grass has germinated and grown an inch, you can start watering once a day but don't let the soil dry out.

Fourteen days after planting fertilizer can be applied at the rate of 7 to 10 lbs. per 1000 sq./ft. A word of caution though, don't apply the fertilizer too soon because the Bermuda grass will overgrow the new rye seed. Additionally, water the fertilizer so that it goes into the soil and doesn't just sit on top of your lawn.

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Another important point to keep in mind is this; if you've planted a new lawn within 100 days of the date of your ryegrass seeding, then don't overseed your lawn. That's because you want the Bermudagrass to have strong root development. If you sow seed over it in an overseed, however, then there will be competition for air, water, sunlight and the needed nutrients as it grows to maturity.

You can have a deep green winter lawn if you follow the tips suggested above.

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