

Planting Warm Season Grass

You start preparation for planting warm season grass in the Fall the year before you intend to put seed in the ground.

That Fall, use a combination of Round Up (generic works) and 24D as per directions to kill weed growth. In the Spring, when it is dry enough to enter the fields and at least 2 weeks prior to the planting date, repeat the herbicide application.

Order the seed well in advance of the planting date. Some folks choose to plant a single species of warm season grass (monoculture) others use a conservation seed mix. i.e. 7# switchgrass 1# Indian Grass 1# Big Blue Stem and 1/4# wild flower mix per acre. There are advantages to both. Consult a reputable seed supplier for advise. Ernst Seed in Meadville, PA is a good example.

Whatever mix you choose, use a no-till-drill for planting. Set the drill at 1/4" depth. These units can be obtained from a variety of sources. Pheasants Forever is one such source. Some conservation offices offer them for rent. There are guys who will come on sight and plant for you. Check in Lancaster Farmer for custom planters.

The drill should be set at 1/4" depth. I found rolling the field with a cultapcker increased soil seed contact and resulted in better germination. This is not necessary but helps. Note that seed broadcasting is a last resort that produces an inferior stand of grass.

Year 1: The plant concentrates on root development. You will see minimum above ground growth. Your job is to provide sun light to the baby plants. The no-till-drill disturbed weed seeds and they germinated. They will grow faster than the grass. You need to mow the weeds to keep them from smothering the infants grass. Set the mower just above the height of the grass. If you question if it is time to mow, mow. It is not unusual to mow 4 or 5 times or more that first year. This is critical to establish a successful stand!

Year 2: You should see more substantial growth. If you want, you can spray the field with 24D herbicide in the early Spring. 24D kills broad leaf weeds. I did this to my fields with great results. Otherwise, mow until your mower will not go above the height of the grass. It will grow much taller this year.

Year 3: The grass should be well established. It will grow faster than the weeds and smother them.

Hope this helps. Don't hesitate to contact me with any questions. 570.814.0195
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