

BMP C120: Temporary and Permanent Seeding

Purpose

Seeding is intended to reduce erosion by stabilizing exposed soils. A well-established vegetative cover is one of the most effective methods of reducing erosion.

Conditions of Use

- Seeding may be used throughout the project on disturbed areas that have reached final grade or that will remain unworked for more than 30 days.
- Channels that will be vegetated should be installed before major earthwork and hydroseeded with a Bonded Fiber Matrix. The vegetation should be well established (i.e., 75 percent cover) before water is allowed to flow in the ditch. With channels that will have high flows, erosion control blankets should be installed over the hydroseed. If vegetation cannot be established from seed before water is allowed in the ditch, sod should be installed in the bottom of the ditch over hydromulch and blankets.
- Retention/detention ponds should be seeded as required.
- Mulch is required at all times because it protects seeds from heat, moisture loss, and transport due to runoff.
- All disturbed areas shall be reviewed in late August to early September and all seeding should be completed by the end of September. Otherwise, vegetation will not establish itself enough to provide more than average protection.
- At final site stabilization, all disturbed areas not otherwise vegetated or stabilized shall be seeded and mulched. Final stabilization means the completion of all soil disturbing activities at the site and the establishment of a permanent vegetative cover, or equivalent permanent stabilization measures (such as pavement, riprap, gabions or geotextiles) which will prevent erosion.

Design and Installation Specifications

- Seeding should be done during those seasons most conducive to growth and will vary with the climate conditions of the region. Local experience should be used to determine the appropriate seeding periods.
- The optimum seeding windows for western Washington are April 1 through June 30 and September 1 through October 1. Seeding that occurs between July 1 and August 30 will require irrigation until 75 percent grass cover is established. Seeding that occurs between October 1 and March 30 will require a mulch or plastic cover until 75 percent grass cover is established.
- To prevent seed from being washed away, confirm that all required surface water control measures have been installed.

- The seedbed should be firm and rough. All soil should be roughened no matter what the slope. If compaction is required for engineering purposes, slopes must be track walked before seeding. Backblading or smoothing of slopes greater than 4:1 is not allowed if they are to be seeded.
- New and more effective restoration-based landscape practices rely on deeper incorporation than that provided by a simple single-pass rototilling treatment. Wherever practical the subgrade should be initially ripped to improve long-term permeability, infiltration, and water inflow qualities. At a minimum, permanent areas shall use soil amendments to achieve organic matter and permeability performance defined in engineered soil/landscape systems. For systems that are deeper than 8 inches the rototilling process should be done in multiple lifts, or the prepared soil system shall be prepared properly and then placed to achieve the specified depth.
- Organic matter is the most appropriate form of “fertilizer” because it provides nutrients (including nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) in the least water-soluble form. A natural system typically releases 2-10 percent of its nutrients annually. Chemical fertilizers have since been formulated to simulate what organic matter does naturally.
- In general, 10-4-6 N-P-K (nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium) fertilizer can be used at a rate of 90 pounds per acre. Slow-release fertilizers should always be used because they are more efficient and have fewer environmental impacts. It is recommended that areas being seeded for final landscaping conduct soil tests to determine the exact type and quantity of fertilizer needed. This will prevent the over-application of fertilizer. Fertilizer should not be added to the hydromulch machine and agitated more than 20 minutes before it is to be used. If agitated too much, the slow-release coating is destroyed.
- There are numerous products available on the market that take the place of chemical fertilizers. These include several with seaweed extracts that are beneficial to soil microbes and organisms. If 100 percent cottonseed meal is used as the mulch in hydroseed, chemical fertilizer may not be necessary. Cottonseed meal is a good source of long-term, slow-release, available nitrogen.
- Hydroseed applications shall include a minimum of 1,500 pounds per acre of mulch with 3 percent tackifier. Mulch may be made up of 100 percent: cottonseed meal; fibers made of wood, recycled cellulose, hemp, and kenaf; compost; or blends of these. Tackifier shall be plant-based, such as guar or alpha plantago, or chemical-based such as polyacrylamide or polymers. Any mulch or tackifier product used shall be installed per manufacturer’s instructions. Generally, mulches come in 40-50 pound bags. Seed and fertilizer are added at time of application.

- Mulch is always required for seeding. Mulch can be applied on top of the seed or simultaneously by hydroseeding.
- On steep slopes, Bonded Fiber Matrix (BFM) or Mechanically Bonded Fiber Matrix (MBFM) products should be used. BFM/MBFM products are applied at a minimum rate of 3,000 pounds per acre of mulch with approximately 10 percent tackifier. Application is made so that a minimum of 95 percent soil coverage is achieved. Numerous products are available commercially and should be installed per manufacturer's instructions. Most products require 24-36 hours to cure before a rainfall and cannot be installed on wet or saturated soils. Generally, these products come in 40-50 pound bags and include all necessary ingredients except for seed and fertilizer.

BFMs and MBFMs have some advantages over blankets:

- No surface preparation required;
- Can be installed via helicopter in remote areas;
- On slopes steeper than 2.5:1, blanket installers may need to be roped and harnessed for safety;
- They are at least \$1,000 per acre cheaper installed.

In most cases, the shear strength of blankets is not a factor when used on slopes, only when used in channels. BFMs and MBFMs are good alternatives to blankets in most situations where vegetation establishment is the goal.

- When installing seed via hydroseeding operations, only about 1/3 of the seed actually ends up in contact with the soil surface. This reduces the ability to establish a good stand of grass quickly. One way to overcome this is to increase seed quantities by up to 50 percent.
- Vegetation establishment can also be enhanced by dividing the hydromulch operation into two phases:
 1. Phase 1- Install all seed and fertilizer with 25-30 percent mulch and tackifier onto soil in the first lift;
 2. Phase 2- Install the rest of the mulch and tackifier over the first lift.

An alternative is to install the mulch, seed, fertilizer, and tackifier in one lift. Then, spread or blow straw over the top of the hydromulch at a rate of about 800-1000 pounds per acre. Hold straw in place with a standard tackifier. Both of these approaches will increase cost moderately but will greatly improve and enhance vegetative establishment. The increased cost may be offset by the reduced need for:

1. Irrigation
2. Reapplication of mulch
3. Repair of failed slope surfaces

This technique works with standard hydromulch (1,500 pounds per acre minimum) and BFM/MBFMs (3,000 pounds per acre minimum).

- Areas to be permanently landscaped shall provide a healthy topsoil that reduces the need for fertilizers, improves overall topsoil quality, provides for better vegetal health and vitality, improves hydrologic characteristics, and reduces the need for irrigation. This can be accomplished in a number of ways:

Recent research has shown that the best method to improve till soils is to amend these soils with compost. The optimum mixture is approximately two parts soil to one part compost. This equates to 4 inches of compost mixed to a depth of 12 inches in till soils. Increasing the concentration of compost beyond this level can have negative effects on vegetal health, while decreasing the concentrations can reduce the benefits of amended soils. Please note: The compost should meet specifications for Grade A quality compost in Ecology Publication 94-038.

Other soils, such as gravel or cobble outwash soils, may require different approaches. Organics and fines easily migrate through the loose structure of these soils. Therefore, the importation of at least 6 inches of quality topsoil, underlain by some type of filter fabric to prevent the migration of fines, may be more appropriate for these soils.

Areas that already have good topsoil, such as undisturbed areas, do not require soil amendments.

- Areas that will be seeded only and not landscaped may need compost or meal-based mulch included in the hydroseed in order to establish vegetation. Native topsoil should be re-installed on the disturbed soil surface before application.
- Seed that is installed as a temporary measure may be installed by hand if it will be covered by straw, mulch, or topsoil. Seed that is installed as a permanent measure may be installed by hand on small areas (usually less than 1 acre) that will be covered with mulch, topsoil, or erosion blankets. The seed mixes listed below include recommended mixes for both temporary and permanent seeding. These mixes, with the exception of the wetland mix, shall be applied at a rate of 120 pounds per acre. This rate can be reduced if soil amendments or slow-release fertilizers are used. Local suppliers or the local conservation district should be consulted for their recommendations because the appropriate mix depends on a variety of factors, including location, exposure, soil type, slope, and expected foot traffic. Alternative seed mixes approved by the local authority may be used.

Table 4.1 represents the standard mix for those areas where just a temporary vegetative cover is required.

Table 4.1 Temporary Erosion Control Seed Mix			
	% Weight	% Purity	% Germination
Chewings or annual blue grass <i>Festuca rubra var. commutata</i> or <i>Poa anna</i>	40	98	90
Perennial rye - <i>Lolium perenne</i>	50	98	90
Redtop or colonial bentgrass <i>Agrostis alba</i> or <i>Agrostis tenuis</i>	5	92	85
White dutch clover <i>Trifolium repens</i>	5	98	90

Table 4.2 provides just one recommended possibility for landscaping seed.

Table 4.2 Landscaping Seed Mix			
	% Weight	% Purity	% Germination
Perennial rye blend <i>Lolium perenne</i>	70	98	90
Chewings and red fescue blend <i>Festuca rubra var. commutata</i> or <i>Festuca rubra</i>	30	98	90

This turf seed mix in Table 4.3 is for dry situations where there is no need for much water. The advantage is that this mix requires very little maintenance.

Table 4.3 Low-Growing Turf Seed Mix			
	% Weight	% Purity	% Germination
Dwarf tall fescue (several varieties) <i>Festuca arundinacea var.</i>	45	98	90
Dwarf perennial rye (Barclay) <i>Lolium perenne var. barclay</i>	30	98	90
Red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i>	20	98	90
Colonial bentgrass <i>Agrostis tenuis</i>	5	98	90

Table 4.4 presents a mix recommended for bioswales and other intermittently wet areas.

Table 4.4 Bioswale Seed Mix*			
	% Weight	% Purity	% Germination
Tall or meadow fescue <i>Festuca arundinacea</i> or <i>Festuca elatior</i>	75-80	98	90
Seaside/Creeping bentgrass <i>Agrostis palustris</i>	10-15	92	85
Redtop bentgrass <i>Agrostis alba</i> or <i>Agrostis gigantea</i>	5-10	90	80

* Modified Briargreen, Inc. Hydroseeding Guide Wetlands Seed Mix

The seed mix shown in Table 4.5 is a recommended low-growing, relatively non-invasive seed mix appropriate for very wet areas that are not regulated wetlands. Other mixes may be appropriate, depending on the soil type and hydrology of the area. Recent research suggests that bentgrass (agrostis sp.) should be emphasized in wet-area seed mixes. Apply this mixture at a rate of 60 pounds per acre.

Table 4.5 Wet Area Seed Mix*			
	% Weight	% Purity	% Germination
Tall or meadow fescue <i>Festuca arundinacea</i> or <i>Festuca elatior</i>	60-70	98	90
Seaside/Creeping bentgrass <i>Agrostis palustris</i>	10-15	98	85
Meadow foxtail <i>Alepcurus pratensis</i>	10-15	90	80
Alsike clover <i>Trifolium hybridum</i>	1-6	98	90
Redtop bentgrass <i>Agrostis alba</i>	1-6	92	85

* Modified Briargreen, Inc. Hydroseeding Guide Wetlands Seed Mix

The meadow seed mix in Table 4.6 is recommended for areas that will be maintained infrequently or not at all and where colonization by native plants is desirable. Likely applications include rural road and utility right-of-way. Seeding should take place in September or very early October in order to obtain adequate establishment prior to the winter months. The appropriateness of clover in the mix may need to be considered, as this can be a fairly invasive species. If the soil is amended, the addition of clover may not be necessary.

Table 4.6 Meadow Seed Mix			
	% Weight	% Purity	% Germination
Redtop or Oregon bentgrass <i>Agrostis alba</i> or <i>Agrostis oregonensis</i>	20	92	85
Red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i>	70	98	90
White dutch clover <i>Trifolium repens</i>	10	98	90

Maintenance Standards

- Any seeded areas that fail to establish at least 80 percent cover (100 percent cover for areas that receive sheet or concentrated flows) shall be reseeded. If reseeding is ineffective, an alternate method, such as sodding, mulching, or nets/blankets, shall be used. If winter weather prevents adequate grass growth, this time limit may be relaxed at the discretion of the local authority when sensitive areas would otherwise be protected.

- After adequate cover is achieved, any areas that experience erosion shall be reseeded and protected by mulch. If the erosion problem is drainage related, the problem shall be fixed and the eroded area reseeded and protected by mulch.
- Seeded areas shall be supplied with adequate moisture, but not watered to the extent that it causes runoff.