

Here at **Red Hen Turf Farm**, we strive to make **Do-It-Yourself Lawn Care Do-able**. We hope you find this guide and our website helpful, and remember, if you EVER have any questions or concerns, give us a call. We're here to help!

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Ready to Grow Grass from Seed? Because we - at Red Hen Turf Farm- plant grass seeds that become sod, we know how much time and work it can take to grow tender seeds into a thick lawn.

Here are some points to ponder before you choose to sod or grow your lawn from seed or hydroseed:

- 1) **Seed will take a year to pass the sock test.** It will take a year or more until seed will cover the ground enough that you can walk on it with white socks and not get in dirt. That is a whole year kids and pets will track dirt into the house.
- 2) **Timing is everything.** In Northern Indiana, for more "sunny" areas with leaves still on the trees, your best odds for seeding success occurs when seed is planted between Aug 15th—Sept 15th. This window will allow the seed to establish a strong enough root system, which will withstand the freezing temperatures of winter. During a typical year, planting after Sept 15th, will still leave opportunity for temperatures to allow for seed germination, but now allow for the root system to have enough time to really get established.
 - ⇒ What if we are outside this August 15—September 15th window of time? Does this mean we have to wait a whole year to plant? It doesn't. The second optimal time to plant seed would be after Thanksgiving through early March, when there are still nightly freeze cycles. Planting during this time is called a "dormant" seeding. A dormant seeding is also quite ideal for shadier areas, since the leaves have fallen off the trees at that point. The idea is to get the seed down when the temperatures will allow for germination, approx. 58°F for Kentucky bluegrass, for instance. As the ground freezes & thaws, Mother Nature will "plant" the seed into the soil for you. When temperatures are right, the seed will begin to germinate. Dormant seeding is preferred over spring seeding, for a couple of different reasons. Dormant seeding is easier, it doesn't require any type of mechanical cultivation to get good contact with the soil. Having the seed already down when spring arrives, will allow the seed to germinate a few weeks earlier. This head start, will allow the seed to have a stronger, established root system to battle the hot summer temperatures.
 - ⇒ Surprisingly, a more challenging time of year to plant seed is what we have referred to as a "Spring" seeding. Seed can be planted in April & May, but a March seeding date will allow more time for a root development before the summer. Be cautious of the "April Showers." Although they bring out the May flowers, they have the ability to wash away seed before it has the chance to germinate.
 - ⇒ Planting seed in the summer is difficult, even with an irrigation system. You might get lucky, but you'll want to plan on likely having to do some re-seeding in the future.
- 3) It is very hard to establish turf on poor soils. Subsoils and sandy soils usually don't possess the nutrients or water holding capacity to germinate and sustain growth, even if a sprinkler system is present.
- 4) Slopes can kill you. The steeper the slope, the more likely erosion will occur, especially around down spouts. Deep gulleys can form and soil will wash into the street. These problems are worse if you are unlucky to seed at the beginning of a rainy period. Fewer seeding companies are repairing washouts without expensive extended care costs.
- 5) It's frustrating and a lot of work. You won't find an exact schedule for growing a lawn because you have to work with the weather Mother Nature gives you. It is tough to know when to apply fertilizers and herbicides, and even more expensive if you use a lawn service.

Want to Learn More? Visit turf.purdue.edu/homeowner-resources

SHOP LOCATION: 29435 Darden Rd, New Carlisle, IN 46552

FIND US AT: 574-232-6811 * turf@redhenturf.com * redhenturf.com * [facebook.com/redhenturf](https://www.facebook.com/redhenturf)

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