

BMP C120: Temporary and Permanent Seeding

Purpose

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

Conditions of Use

Use seeding throughout the project on disturbed areas that have reached final grade or that will remain unworked for more than 30 days.

The optimum seeding windows for western Washington are April 1 through June 30 and September 1 through October 1.

Between July 1 and August 30 seeding requires irrigation until 75 percent grass cover is established.

Between October 1 and March 30 seeding requires a cover of mulch with straw or an erosion control blanket until 75 percent grass cover is established.

Review all disturbed areas in late August to early September and complete all seeding by the end of September. Otherwise, vegetation will not establish itself enough to provide more than average protection.

- Mulch is required at all times for seeding because it protects seeds from heat, moisture loss, and transport due to runoff. Mulch can be applied on top of the seed or simultaneously by hydroseeding. See [BMP C121: Mulching](#) for specifications.
- Seed and mulch, all disturbed areas not otherwise vegetated at final site stabilization. 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

Seed retention/detention ponds as required.

Install channels intended for vegetation before starting major earthwork and hydroseed with a Bonded Fiber Matrix. For vegetated channels that will have high flows, install erosion control blankets over hydroseed. Before allowing water to flow in vegetated channels, establish 75 percent vegetation cover. If vegetated channels cannot be established by seed before water flow, install sod in the channel bottom—over hydromulch and erosion control blankets.

- Confirm the installation of all required surface water control measures to prevent seed from washing away.
- Hydroseed applications shall include a minimum of 1,500 pounds per acre of mulch with 3 percent tackifier. See [BMP C121: Mulching](#) for specifications.
- Areas that will have seeding only and not landscaping may need compost or meal-based mulch included in the hydroseed in order to establish vegetation. Re-install native topsoil on the disturbed soil surface before application.
- 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. To overcome this, consider increasing seed quantities by up to 50 percent.
- Enhance vegetation establishment 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.

Or, enhance vegetation by:

1. Installing the mulch, seed, fertilizer, and tackifier in one lift.
2. Spread or blow straw over the top of the hydromulch at a rate of 800-1000 pounds per acre.
3. 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:

- Irrigation.
- Reapplication of mulch.
- 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).

- Seed may be installed by hand if:
 - Temporary and covered by straw, mulch, or topsoil.
 - Permanent in small areas (usually less than 1 acre) and covered with mulch, topsoil, or erosion blankets.
 - The seed mixes listed in the tables below include recommended mixes for both temporary and permanent seeding.

- Apply these mixes, with the exception of the wetland mix, at a rate of 120 pounds per acre. This rate can be reduced if soil amendments or slow-release fertilizers are used.
- Consult the local suppliers or the local conservation district 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.
- Other mixes may be appropriate, depending on the soil type and hydrology of the area.
- [Table 4.1.2](#) lists the standard mix for areas requiring a temporary vegetative cover.

Table 4.1.2 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 4.1.3](#) lists a recommended mix for landscaping seed.

Table 4.1.3 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

- [Table 4.1.4](#) lists a turf seed mix for dry situations where there is no need for watering. This mix requires very little maintenance.

Table 4.1.4 Low-Growing Turf Seed Mix			
	% Weight	% Purity	% Germination
Dwarf tall fescue (several varieties) <i>Festuca arundinacea</i> var.	45	98	90
Dwarf perennial rye (Barclay) <i>Lolium perenne</i> var. <i>barclay</i>	30	98	90
Red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i>	20	98	90
Colonial bentgrass <i>Agrostis tenuis</i>	5	98	90

- [Table 4.1.5](#) lists a mix for bioswales and other intermittently wet areas.

Table 4.1.5 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

- [Table 4.1.6](#) lists a low-growing, relatively non-invasive seed mix appropriate for very wet areas that are not regulated wetlands. Apply this mixture at a rate of 60 pounds per acre. Consult Hydraulic Permit Authority (HPA) for seed mixes if applicable.

Table 4.1.6 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

- [Table 4.1.7](#) lists a recommended meadow seed mix for infrequently maintained areas or non-maintained areas 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. Consider the appropriateness of clover, a fairly invasive species, in the mix. Amending the soil can reduce the need for clover.

Table 4.1.7 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

- **Roughening and Rototilling:**
 - The seedbed should be firm and rough. Roughen all soil no matter what the slope. Track walk slopes before seeding if engineering purposes require compaction. Backblading or smoothing of slopes greater than 4H:1V is not allowed if they are to be seeded.
 - Restoration-based landscape practices require deeper incorporation than that provided by a simple single-pass rototilling treatment. Wherever practical, initially rip the subgrade 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 complete the rototilling process in multiple lifts, or prepare the engineered soil system per specifications and place to achieve the specified depth.
- **Fertilizers:**
 - Conducting soil tests to determine the exact type and quantity of fertilizer is recommended. This will prevent the over-application of fertilizer.
 - Organic matter is the most appropriate form of fertilizer because it provides nutrients (including nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) in the least water-soluble form.
 - In general, use 10-4-6 N-P-K (nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium) fertilizer at a rate of 90 pounds per acre. Always use slow-release fertilizers because they are more efficient and have fewer environmental impacts. Do not add fertilizer to the hydromulch machine, or agitate, more than 20 minutes before use. Too much agitation destroys the slow-release coating.
 - There are numerous products available 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 provides a good source of long-term, slow-release, available nitrogen.
- **Bonded Fiber Matrix and Mechanically Bonded Fiber Matrix:**
 - On steep slopes use Bonded Fiber Matrix (BFM) or Mechanically Bonded Fiber Matrix (MBFM) products. Apply BFM/MBFM products at a minimum rate of 3,000 pounds per acre of mulch with approximately 10 percent tackifier. Achieve a minimum of 95 percent soil coverage during application. Numerous products are available commercially. Installed products per manufacturer's instructions. Most products require 24-36 hours to cure before rainfall and cannot be installed on wet or saturated soils.

Generally, products come in 40-50 pound bags and include all necessary ingredients except for seed and fertilizer.

- BFM and MBFMs provide good alternatives to blankets in most areas requiring vegetation establishment. Advantages over blankets include:
 - BFM and MBFMs do not require surface preparation.
 - Helicopters can assist in installing BFM and MBFMs in remote areas.
 - On slopes steeper than 2.5H:1V, blanket installers may require ropes and harnesses for safety.
 - Installing BFM and MBFMs can save at least \$1,000 per acre compared to blankets.

Maintenance Standards

Reseed any seeded areas that fail to establish at least 80 percent cover (100 percent cover for areas that receive sheet or concentrated flows). If reseeding is ineffective, use an alternate method such as sodding, mulching, or nets/blankets. 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.

- Reseed and protect by mulch any areas that experience erosion after achieving adequate cover. Reseed and protect by mulch any eroded area.
- Supply seeded areas with adequate moisture, but do not water to the extent that it causes runoff.

Approved as Equivalent

Ecology has approved products as able to meet the requirements of [BMP C120](#). The products did not pass through the Technology Assessment Protocol – Ecology (TAPE) process. Local jurisdictions may choose not to accept this product approved as equivalent, or may require additional testing prior to consideration for local use. The products are available for review on Ecology's website at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/newtech/equivalent.html>.