



LAWN AND YARD SOLUTIONS

Complete Lawn Reseeding & Year-Round Care Guide for Tracy, California

A season-by-season playbook built for the Central Valley's clay soils, extreme heat, and unique growing conditions.

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Section 1: When to Reseed Your Tracy Lawn

Tracy sits in California's Central Valley with summer highs regularly hitting 100°F+, which makes timing everything. Your grass type determines your window.

Grass Type	Best Seeding Window	Notes
Tall Fescue (RECOMMENDED)	Mid-Sept – Mid-Oct	Soil cools to 50–65°F; less weed pressure; roots establish before winter
Bermuda Grass	Late April – Mid-June	Needs sustained soil temps of 65°F+ to germinate
Perennial Ryegrass	Mid-Sept – Oct	Fast germination; similar window to Tall Fescue
Kentucky Bluegrass	Sept – Early Oct	Slower to establish; needs cool temps

🏆 **Tall Fescue is the best all-around choice for Tracy.** It handles summer heat, clay soil, and drought better than any other cool-season grass. Your ideal reseeding window is **September 15 – October 10.**

Section 2: How to Properly Reseed Your Lawn

Before You Start (August – Early September)

1. **Get a soil test** — Tracy's clay-adobe soils are often alkaline (pH 7.5–8.0). Target pH 6.0–7.0. Contact UC Cooperative Extension or use a mail-in kit.
2. **Gather supplies:** Tall Fescue seed (8–10 lbs per 1,000 sq ft for overseeding; 15–20 lbs for full reseed), starter fertilizer, core aerator (rental), broadcast spreader, soil amendment, and compost.

Full Reseed Steps

Step 1 — Kill Existing Lawn: Apply glyphosate-based herbicide on a calm, dry day. Avoid imazapyr — it lingers in soil. Wait 7–14 days for full kill.

Step 2 — Scalp and Remove Debris: Mow as short as possible, rake up dead material and thatch.

Step 3 — Dethatch: Run a dethatcher or vertical mower to break up remaining thatch. Critical for seed-to-soil contact.

Step 4 — Core Aerate: Make two passes in perpendicular directions. Leave plugs on the surface. THE most important step for Tracy's compacted clay soil.

Step 5 — Amend the Soil: If pH above 7.2: apply sulfur per soil test. Topdress with ½ inch of screened compost. For severely compacted areas: till in 2–3 inches of compost.

Step 6 — Apply Starter Fertilizer: See Starter Fertilizer section (Section 3).

Step 7 — Seed: Load half your seed and walk north–south. Load the other half and walk east–west. Bi-directional method eliminates streaking and gaps.

Step 8 — Lightly Cover Seed: Topdress with ⅛ – ¼ inch of screened compost or peat moss. Do NOT bury seed deeper than ¼ inch.

Step 9 — Roll or Tamp: Use a lawn roller (half-filled with water) or hand tamp to press seed firmly into soil.

Step 10 — Water Immediately: Begin germination irrigation schedule right away.

Post-Seeding Irrigation Schedule

Phase	Frequency	Duration	Goal
Days 1–14 (Germination)	2–3x daily	5–10 min each	Keep top ½ inch moist; never let it dry
Days 15–28 (Seedling)	1–2x daily	10 min	Roots beginning; reduce slightly
Weeks 5–8	Every other day	15–20 min	Encourage deeper roots
Week 9+	2–3x per week	20–30 min	Normal schedule

 **Never let newly seeded soil dry out completely during the first 3 weeks** — this is the #1 cause of reseeding failure in Tracy's low-humidity fall air.

First Mow

Mow when new grass reaches 3–3.5 inches, typically 3–4 weeks after germination. Set blade to 2.5 inches for first cut. Use a sharp blade; never mow wet soil. Stay off new grass as much as possible for the first 8 weeks.

Section 3: Starter Fertilizer — Timing & Application

Application	Timing	Product Type	Rate
At Seeding	Day of seeding	Phosphorus-rich starter (e.g., 12-24-12 or Scotts Starter 24-25-4)	Per label; ~1 lb P ₂ O ₅ per 1,000 sq ft
4–6 Weeks After Germination	Mid-Oct to early Nov	Balanced slow-release (e.g., 16-6-8)	Per label

 **Do NOT apply pre-emergent herbicide at seeding time** — it will prevent your grass seed from germinating. Skip pre-emergent on newly seeded areas until the lawn has been mowed at least **3–4 times**.

Section 4: Month-by-Month Lawn Care Calendar

Calibrated for Tracy, CA — USDA Zone 9b, Clay-Adobe Soil, Tall Fescue Lawn



JANUARY — 🌧️ Planning Season

- **Mowing:** As needed — minimal growth
- **Watering:** Rely on winter rains; supplement only if soil is dry 2 inches down
- **Fertilizer:** None
- **To-Do:** Get soil test done now (results guide spring amendments); plan aeration if not done in fall; order seed for bare spots

FEBRUARY — 🌤️ Early Wake-Up

- **Mowing:** Resume light mowing as growth begins (around late February)
- **Watering:** Supplement rainfall as needed
- **Pre-Emergent:** ⚠️ **KEY APPLICATION** — Apply first pre-emergent of the year by late Feb/early March, before soil hits 55°F. This is the most critical pre-emergent application of the year — miss it and you'll fight crabgrass all summer. Use prodiamine (Barricade) or dithiopyr (Dimension).
- **Fertilizer:** None yet — wait until March
- **To-Do:** Test and run sprinkler system; replace broken heads; adjust coverage

SPRING

MARCH — Spring Green-Up

- **Mowing:** Weekly mowing resumes. Set height to 3–3.5"
- **Watering:** Transition to 2–3x per week
- **Pre-Emergent:** Apply second split application for extended crabgrass prevention through summer
- **Fertilizer:**  First spring fertilizer — balanced slow-release (e.g., 15-5-10 or 16-4-8). Kickstarts spring green-up.
- **Soil Amendments:** Apply sulfur if pH needs lowering; apply compost topdress for clay soil improvement
- **Core Aeration:** If fall aeration was skipped, do it now before lawn fully wakes up
- **Broadleaf Weeds:** Begin spot-treating dandelions, clover, and oxalis as they emerge
- **To-Do:** Sharpen mower blade; inspect turf for winter damage or bare spots — patch with seed now

APRIL — Peak Growth Begins

- **Mowing:** Weekly; never remove more than ⅓ of blade at a time
- **Watering:** Increase to 3x per week as temps rise
- **Fertilizer:**  Second spring feeding — slow-release balanced formula
- **Pre-Emergent:** Final opportunity if missed earlier. Use dithiopyr (Dimension) — has some post-emergent activity on young crabgrass
- **Broadleaf Weeds:** Active spray month — treat clover, dandelion, spurge, and oxalis with 3-way selective herbicide (2,4-D + MCPP + dicamba). Spray on calm days above 60°F.
- **Surface Insects:** Begin monitoring for sod webworm and chinch bugs
- **Fungus:** Low risk this time of year. No treatment needed.

MAY — 🌸 Critical Pest Window ★ KEY MONTH

- **Mowing:** Weekly at 3.5–4" as heat increases
- **Watering:** Increase frequency; transition to 4–6 AM watering only
- **Fertilizer:** ✅ May fertilizer — slow-release nitrogen (e.g., 24-0-11 or 32-0-6)
- 🐛 **GRUB PREVENTIVE — KEY APPLICATION:** Apply chlorantraniliprole (Scotts GrubEx) or imidacloprid in May–June. Optimal preventive window — grub beetles are laying eggs and young grubs are near the surface. Water in well (½ inch irrigation). Most effective timing of the year.
- **Surface Insects:** Apply bifenthrin (e.g., Ortho Bug B Gon or Bifen IT) as preventive barrier for sod webworm, chinch bugs, and armyworms. Treat in the evening.
- **Broadleaf Weeds:** Continue spot-treating. Switch to spurge/oxalis-specific product if needed.
- **Fungus:** Watch begins. Dethatch if thatch exceeds ½ inch.

🌸 SUMMER

JUNE — ☀️ Early Summer Management

- **Mowing:** Weekly; raise height to 4" to shade soil and reduce water loss
- **Watering:** Deep watering 3–4x per week, 4–6 AM only
- **Fertilizer:** ✅ Early summer feeding — slow-release nitrogen; avoid quick-release in heat
- **Grubs:** Preventive should be down. Monitor for irregular brown patches.
- **Surface Insects:** Second bifenthrin application if activity observed. Check for chinch bugs, armyworms (soap drench test), and sod webworms.
- 🍄 **Fungus (Brown Patch):** Risk rises sharply when nights stay above 70°F. Apply preventive fungicide (azoxystrobin, propiconazole, or thiophanate-methyl) if you had problems last year or at first sign of circular brown rings. Rotate chemistries to avoid resistance.
- **Weeds:** Spot-treat nutsedge with halosulfuron (Sedgehammer). Pre-emergent no longer effective on established weeds.

JULY — Heat Survival Mode

- **Mowing:** 3.5–4" height. Mow in early morning. Sharp blade only — dull cuts tear grass under heat stress.
- **Watering:** 3–4x per week, 4–6 AM only. Deep and infrequent beats shallow and frequent.
- **Fertilizer:**  None. High nitrogen in 100°F heat will burn your lawn and cause disease.
- **Iron:** If yellowing, apply iron sulfate or chelated iron (EDDHA) for green color without pushing growth.
-  **Grubs (Curative):** Monitor for irregular brown patches that peel up like a rug. Apply Arena 50 WDG (0.22–0.29 oz per 1,000 sq ft) or Arena 0.25G (2.8–3.7 lbs per 1,000 sq ft) by Nufarm. Does not need to be immediately watered in. Note: Trichlorfon (Dylox) is completely banned in California and is not available to anyone.
-  **Fungus (Brown Patch):** Watch for circular tan/brown rings. Apply azoxystrobin or propiconazole-based fungicide if found.
- **Surface Insects:** Watch for sod webworm moths at dusk and chinch bug damage at lawn edges. Treat with bifenthrin if present.
- **To-Do:** Get a soil test this month. Order fall seed early.

AUGUST — 🌾 Pre-Reseeding Prep

- **Mowing:** 3.5–4". Keep blades sharp.
- **Watering:** Same as July. Do not over-water trying to compensate for heat.
- **Fertilizer:** ❌ None on established lawn.
- 🐛 **Grubs (Preventive):** Last window for preventive grub control — apply chlorantraniliprole (Scotts GrubEx) in late August if missed in spring. Water in well.
- 🐛 **Grubs (Curative):** If active damage found, apply Arena 50 WDG or Arena 0.25G (clothianidin) by Nufarm. Note: Trichlorfon (Dylox) is completely banned in California.
- **Surface Insects:** Continue monitoring; treat with bifenthrin as needed.
- **Fungus:** Continue monitoring for brown patch if nighttime temps stay above 70°F.
- **To-Do:** ✅ Buy amendments, rent core aerator, buy seed and starter fertilizer, plan irrigation schedule, mark bare/thin areas.



SEPTEMBER — PRIME RESEEDING MONTH KEY MONTH

- **RESEED** mid-Sept to early Oct (see full reseeding process in Section 2)
- Aerate entire lawn before seeding
- Topdress with a light layer of topsoil ($\frac{1}{8}$ – $\frac{1}{4}$ inch) over seeded areas to improve seed-to-soil contact and help retain moisture for germination — do not apply more than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or seed may be buried too deep
- Apply starter fertilizer at time of seeding
- **Mowing:** Mow established areas to 1.5–2" before overseeding to reduce competition
- **Watering:** Germination schedule (2–3x daily, light) on seeded areas; continue deep watering on established zones
- **Fertilizer:** Apply first fall fertilizer to established areas (balanced slow-release, 16-6-8 or similar)
- **Pre-Emergent:**  Do NOT apply on seeded areas. Can apply on established non-seeded border areas for Poa annua control using prodiamine or dithiopyr.
- **Weeds:** Spot-treat broadleaf weeds in established areas with selective broadleaf herbicide (2,4-D + MCPP + dicamba blend)
- **Fungus:** Brown patch risk still elevated. New seedlings are especially vulnerable.

OCTOBER — 🍂 New Lawn Establishment

- **New Grass:** Should be 1.5–2" tall and ready for first mow by mid-month
- **Mowing:** First mow of new grass at 2.5". Do not bag — let clippings return.
- **Watering:** Gradually transition from daily to every-other-day watering
- **Fertilizer:** Second feeding 4–6 weeks after seeding (balanced 16-6-8 or slow-release 19-0-6)
- **Pre-Emergent (Fall):** Once new grass has been mowed 3–4 times, apply fall pre-emergent (proflam or pendimethalin) for *Poa annua* and winter annual weeds. Critical but often-missed application.
- **Broadleaf Weeds:** Last effective window before cool temps reduce herbicide uptake. 3-way broadleaf herbicide; do not apply to seedlings younger than 8 weeks.
- **Grubs:** Continue monitoring. Apply Arena (clothianidin) if damage is active.
- **To-Do:** Check and winterize irrigation system; clean mower deck and sharpen blades.

NOVEMBER — 🍁 Hardening Off

- **Mowing:** Reduce frequency as growth slows. Final height 2.5–3". Do not scalp.
- **Watering:** Reduce to 1–2x per week as temps cool
- **Fertilizer:** Apply winterizer fertilizer (low nitrogen, high potassium — e.g., 6-0-18 or 5-10-31). Potassium strengthens roots and improves winter hardiness and spring green-up.
- **Pre-Emergent:** If not applied in October, apply now for *Poa annua* and henbit control
- **Weeds:** Final chance for broadleaf weed control before dormancy
- **Fungus:** Risk drops with cooler temps. No treatment typically needed.
- **To-Do:** Blow out or drain irrigation system before first frost.

WINTER (CONT.)

DECEMBER — Rest & Plan

- **Mowing:** Rarely needed. Only if growth occurs after warm spells.
- **Watering:** Once per week or less. Watch for free water from winter rains.
- **Fertilizer:**  None
- **To-Do:** Plan next year's program; order pre-emergent and grub control products early; note any problem areas.

Section 5: Quick Homeowner Reference Product Guide

Task	Product Examples	Timing
Pre-emergent (spring)	Barricade (prodiamine), Dimension (dithiopyr)	Late Feb – March
Pre-emergent (fall)	Prodiamine, Pendimethalin	Oct – Nov
Broadleaf weeds	Ortho Weed B Gon, Trimec, Bonide Weed Beater Ultra	March–June; Oct
Nutsedge	Sedgehammer (halosulfuron)	May–July
Grub preventive	Scotts GrubEx (chlorantraniliprole)	May–June
Grub curative (active infestation)	Arena 50 WDG or Arena 0.25G (clothianidin) by Nufarm	Aug–Oct when grub activity noted; does not need immediate watering-in
Surface insects	Bifen IT or Ortho Bug B Gon (bifenthrin)	May–Aug
Brown patch fungus	Heritage (azoxystrobin), Headway, Propiconazole	June–Sept
Starter fertilizer	Scotts Starter 24-25-4, Lesco Starter	At seeding
Spring/Summer fertilizer	Milorganite, Scotts Turf Builder, Lesco 24-0-11	March, April, May, June
Winterizer	Scotts Turf Builder WinterGuard (32-0-10)	November

Section 6: Top Tips for Tracy's Unique Challenges

 **Clay Soil:** Aerate aggressively every fall. Add compost annually to slowly improve soil structure over time.

 **Water Restrictions:** Check with the San Joaquin County Water District before setting your controller — restrictions vary by season.

 **Heat Stress:** Never fertilize with quick-release nitrogen when temps are above 90°F. Iron is your best friend for color in summer.

 **Pre-Emergent Timing:** Tracy's soil heats up fast in spring — don't miss your February/March pre-emergent window. Once you see crabgrass, it's too late.

 **Reseeding + Pre-Emergent Conflict:** You cannot use pre-emergent on areas where you intend to seed for 8–12 weeks prior, depending on the product. Plan accordingly.

 **Soil Testing:** Test every 2–3 years. Tracy's adobe soil can shift alkaline over time, affecting nutrient uptake.

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This guide is intended for informational purposes only. Always read and follow product label directions before applying any pesticide, herbicide, or fertilizer. Consult a licensed pest control advisor or UC Cooperative Extension for personalized recommendations.

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