



From:

Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
Gilpin County Office
230 Norton Drive
Golden CO, 80403
303-582-9106

Dear Homeowner/Septic system installer,

In this letter, please find information about revegetating newly installed septic systems.

Why is revegetation such a critical step?

- It allows for the proper functioning of your septic system (evapotranspiration from grassy plants is a key component to system function),
- it helps prevent the spread of noxious weeds,
- and it improves site aesthetics.

We would like to stress the role that septic system installation can play in the spread of noxious weeds (please refer to enclosed brochure for photos). Many people have come in to the Extension office with a serious weed problem, saying that “it all started on our septic system.” This is because newly disturbed bare ground, with no vegetation, is the perfect spot for weed seeds to land and germinate. In some cases, weed seeds are brought in with fill dirt. When possible, use dirt from the location of the installation, and if dirt must be brought in, inquire as to where it came from, and what weed seeds might be present.

The septic system should be revegetated as soon as possible, and it should be monitored closely for at least two to three growing seasons to ensure that no weed seeds were brought in. If you have any trouble identifying the weeds, please do not hesitate to bring in a sample to the Extension office. Timely control of these weeds makes them much easier to eradicate, and will prevent them from spreading elsewhere on your property, and onto neighboring lands.

Please read the following information carefully, and if you have any questions, do not hesitate to call the Gilpin Extension office (303-582-9106).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irene Shonle".

Irene Shonle, Gilpin Extension Director

Seeding grasses successfully on leach fields/septic systems

When to plant

Generally, the best time to seed is in the late fall, just before the first significant snowfall. The seeds will then germinate in the spring. The other time in Colorado for seeding is in late June or early July, just before the monsoonal moisture.

Preparing the Soil

Because most native grasses are well adapted to our rocky, lean soils, soil enrichment is not required. However improving the soil prior to planting will help rocky soils hold more water.

- Control any existing weeds – please see enclosed brochure for photographs.. (if you need help identifying or controlling weeds, contact the Extension office or visit the Gilpin weed website: <http://www.coopext.colostate.edu/gilpin/weeds.shtml>)
- Loosen soil to a depth of 3-4 inches with a rake or shovel, leaving some to the side to cover the seeds.

Preparing the Seed and Sowing

Thoroughly mix the seed in a bucket with moist sand. Use a ratio of 2 parts seed, 1 part sand. Because grass seed is fluffy, this technique helps sow the seed evenly. Follow the recommended amount of seed per square foot – varies with grass type.

- Broadcast the seed/sand mixture by hand.
- Use the flat side of a rake to smooth the soil over the seeds, and lightly tamp by walking on it.
- Place a thin layer of mulch (use **weed-free** straw, hay, or matting) over the seed to retain moisture and keep birds from eating the seed.

Planting Seeds on a Slope

- After sowing, cover the soil with an erosion preventing material, like weed-free wheat or barley straw or aspen excelsior matting that can be pegged into place. A biodegradable soil binder can also be used to hold the soil in place.

Maintenance

- Watch for noxious weed germination for the first few growing seasons. It is MUCH easier to control weeds when they first germinate than when they have been in a site for many years. Weed seeds may start on your septic system, but they can quickly spread to the rest of your property.

Types of grasses to plant at high elevations

Native grasses (bunch grasses, except Western wheatgrass)

<i>Bromus marginatus</i>	Mountain Brome
<i>Chondrosum gracile (Bouteloua gracilis)</i>	Blue grama
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	Tufted hairgrass
<i>Elymus glaucus</i>	Blue wild rye
<i>Elymus trachycaulus</i>	Slender wheatgrass
<i>Festuca arizonica</i>	Arizona fescue
<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	Junegrass
<i>Muhlenbergia Montana</i>	Mountain muhly
<i>Pascopyrum (Agropyron) smithii</i>	Western wheatgrass

Non-native grass (sod-forming – grows 2-3' tall, can be mowed)

<i>Bromus inermis</i>	Smooth Brome
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Seed Sources*

Jefferson Soil Conservation District
Has a "Front Range" seed mix
including many of the above grasses
720-544-2870

Pawnee Buttes Seed, Inc., Greeley
(800)782-5947 or (970)356-7002

Arkansas Valley Seed Solutions
Longmont, (970)535-4481

Sharp Bros. Seed Co.
Greeley, (970)356-4710

Evergreen Nursery
26479 Highway 74
Kittredge, Colorado, 80457
(303)674-2132

Western Native Seed
P.O. Box 188
Coaldale, CO 81222
Phone: (719) 942-3935

Plants of the Southwest
3095 Agua Fria Rd
Santa Fe NM 87507
(505) 438-8888
1-800-788-7333

High Country Gardens
2902 Rufina Street
Santa Fe, NM 87505
1-800-925-9387
(High Mountain Native Grass Seed Mix)

Web-only:
<http://www.nativegrasses.com/info/ornamental/highmountain.html>

* This information is provided as a public service with the understanding that Colorado State University Cooperative Extension does not endorse any commercial providers or their products.

