RJB Fact Sheet Number 1

The Control of Moss Using Chitted Grass Seed

Many lawns suffer from moss infestation. The moss problem in most cases is a result of inappropriate grass mixtures dominating the lawn.
Very often we consider wet conditions, shade or impacted soil as the main reasons why moss grows successfully in a lawn.
It is interesting to note however, that the reasons stated above are most unlikely to be the main reason that moss establishes in the lawn.

Consider the following facts……..

- **The moss growing in the lawn is not a strong plant. It has no conventional root system and it needs to be protected from the elements – wind, sun and very low temperatures. This can be achieved by the moss**
  growing in between the coarse grasses in the lawn.
- **The coarse lawn grasses do not grow very well in harsh conditions ie heavy shade and very wet conditions. The result of this is many gaps in the lawn which will allow the moss and broadleaved weeds to establish.**
- **Many lawns in the UK are dominated by two grass species……**

  - **Lolium perenne – Perennial rye grass**
  - **Poa pratenses - Smooth stalked meadow grass**

These two grasses have excellent properties in respect to wear and durability, however they lack the density of cover and therefore can allow broadleaved weeds and moss to establish.

Two other lawn grasses can be added to the existing lawn which will improve the density of grass cover in the lawn. This will reduce the opportunity of broadleaved weeds and moss to establish.
The two grasses are normally associated with fine quality lawns. It is important to note that these will grow very successfully in most lawns.

The two grasses are……

- **Agrostis tenuis - Brown top bent**
- **Festuca rubra - Fescue**

One method of incorporating these two grasses is to chit (pre germinate) the grass and then apply to the lawn. An ideal time to do this is straight after scarification in early April or early September.

The advantages of using chitted grass seed are the fast establishment of the grass and in most cases birds will not eat the germinating seed.
It is very important to ensure that the moss and any broadleaved weeds are killed before scarification commences – the use of Iron sulphate to kill the moss and selective herbicides to kill the broadleaved weeds is recommended for consideration.

The method is as follows…….

- **Fill a 6 inch (15cm) pot with grass seed containing the Agrostis tenuis and Fescue rubra grass seed. Look for a good quality grass seed mixture, often sold as a luxury grass seed mixture.**
- **Fill a good quality black bin liner up to three quarters with a compost that is suitable to be added to the surface of the lawn.**
- **Empty the 6 inch pot of grass seed into the black bin liner three quarters filled with compost, which should be moist but not wet. Thoroughly mix the seed with the compost.**
- **Seal the bag and leave in the garage for a period of six to eight days.**
- **It is important to check the bag from five days onwards in order to check that germination has only just begun – no green shoots must be present.**
- **The lawn should be scarified to coincide with the germination of the grass seed which is normally from five days after starting this process.**
- **After scarification the compost containing the chitted grass seed can be very thinly spread over the lawn. As an estimate one bin liner will cover an area equal to 4 m by 4 m. When the grass seed commences germination the first root and shoot grows in a sheath which protects them from any physical damage when you apply the top dressing to the lawn.**

After two weeks the two grasses will establish in the lawn, which will provide an improved quality to the surface. This action will very much reduce moss and broadleaved weed infection in the future.

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