

Disaster Relief

Caring for Flooded Lawns

Debris

Pick up any debris, such as wood, glass, stones, nails and other metal objects deposited on lawn areas. This debris is a safety hazard and can damage power mowers. Remove leaves or any other material that would smother grass.

Silted Lawns-1 Inch or Less

Lawns submerged for less than 4 days and covered with an inch or less of silt have a good chance of recovery. To assist recovery:

- If water use is unrestricted in your area, wash as much silt as possible from the lawn using a garden hose.
- To encourage root development, keep the remaining silt crust broken throughout the growing season, or until grass has become well-established. Use a steel tooth garden rake, a mechanical aerator, or spiking equipment to break up the silt crust.
- Apply a nitrogen fertilizer to the lawn. Use whatever grade fertilizer you can obtain, applied at a rate of 1 pound nitrogen per 1000 square feet of lawn area.
- Have a soil sample tested as soon as possible to determine lime, phosphorous and potassium requirements of soil. Follow the recommendations given with test report.
- If lawn recovery is spotty or generally thin, mechanically aerate the lawn four to six times in late summer or early spring. Then overseed with a desirable permanent seed mixture.
- In southern areas, vegetative sprigging or plugging may be preferable to seeding.

Silted Lawns-More Than 1 Inch

Lawns covered with more than 1 inch of silt may be heavily damaged, with only a slight chance of recovery. Degree of recovery will vary with grass species and depth of silt. Re-establish the lawn as follows:

- Remove as much silt as possible, especially if silt accumulation exceeds 3 inches.
- If silt is less than 3 inches, or has been removed to this depth, till the area, making sure the silt is mixed thoroughly and uniformly through the top 4 inches of the original soil.
- Take a soil sample of the new soil mixture after silt has been mixed in. Have the mixture tested to determine lime, phosphate and potash requirements.

- Retill after applying lime and fertilizer according to soil test recommendations.
- Reseed or vegetatively replant the area as you would to establish a new lawn. Vegetative plantings of warm season grasses may be made any time during the growing season. Seedings, especially of cool season grasses, should be made in early spring or late summer.

Flooded Lawns

Degree of injury will depend on duration of submergence, water depth, temperature, grass species, light intensity and the condition of grass prior to flooding. Grass will survive much longer at water temperature below 60 °F than at higher water temperature. Most grasses will survive 4 to 6 days submergence at normal summer temperatures. Aerate and lightly fertilize flooded areas as soon as possible after the water recedes. Areas submerged longer than 4 to 6 days may not survive and will require complete reestablishment as noted above.

Loss of Topsoil-Eroded Areas

- Where topsoil has been greatly eroded, replace it to a depth of 4 to 6 inches late in the growing season.
- If topsoil is unavailable or too expensive, improve existing soil by adding organic matter such as peat, rotted sawdust, manure or other materials. Apply these materials at a rate of 3 cubic yards per 1000 square feet of lawn area, and work materials into the top 4 inches of subsoil. A temporary lawn, established immediately and later worked into the subsoil, can also be a source of organic matter.

Establishing Temporary Lawns

- Where lawns must be completely re-established and immediate cover is needed, scratch the soil surface with a hand rake or similar tillage tool.
- Seed common ryegrass at a rate of 4 to 5 pounds per 1000 square feet.
- Till the ryegrass under at the appropriate time for reestablishment. Seed permanent grasses, or plant vegetative material.

Oil and Chemical Spills

Soils may have been saturated with oil, herbicides, or other toxic material. Petroleum will eventually decompose, but nothing can be done in the meantime to counteract its harmful effects. On large areas, bury oil deposits by deep plowing. On small areas, remove petroleum-soaked soil to a

depth of 6 inches, and replace with new topsoil. Reseed or vegetatively plant at the appropriate time.

Turf Diseases

Turf diseases may be prevalent on surviving turf areas. Contact your County Extension Agent for advice on fungicide application.

Weeds

Floodwater may carry and spread weed seeds. However, weed control should not be a primary concern since a weed cover is better than no cover and will even help dry out soil. Weeds can be controlled best with chemicals in the fall or spring. Contact your County Extension Agent for proper chemical controls.



msucares.com

From The Disaster Handbook - 1998 National Edition, University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences SP 2431.

Distributed in Mississippi by **Clifford Hampton**, Special Projects Coordinator, Extension/MAFES

Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, group affiliation, age, disability, or veteran status.

Information Sheet 1710

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. JOE H. MCGILLBERRY, Director

(10M-09-04)