

Before you cultivate the soil and get ready for seeding, it's a good idea to have your soil tested for fertility and pH. Many garden centers, nurseries, and universities offer this service. Fees will vary. Contact your county extension office for the name and address of the nearest soil test lab. The extension office can also give you instructions for mailing the soil sample.

Adequate levels of phosphorus and potassium are important for vigorous root growth, so you'll want to add these nutrients if the soil test shows they're needed. Also, most grasses grow best when the soil is neutral (pH of 7) or slightly acidic. If the soil test shows a pH of less than 6, spread enough lime to sufficiently "sweeten" the soil.

Finally, broadcast a balanced fertilizer containing nitrogen (preferably slow-release), phosphorus, and potassium, or a specially formulated lawn food just before cultivation. Follow the manufacturer's package instructions and use a good mechanical spreader.