

BMP C120: Temporary and Permanent Seeding

Purpose

Seeding is intended to reduce erosion by stabilizing exposed soils. A well-established vegetative cover is one of the most effective methods of reducing erosion.

Conditions of Use

- Seeding may be used throughout the project on disturbed areas that have reached final grade or that will remain unworked for more than 30 days.
- Channels that will be vegetated should be installed before major earthwork and hydroseeded with a Bonded Fiber Matrix. The vegetation should be well established (i.e., 75 percent cover) before water is allowed to flow in the ditch. With channels that will have high flows, erosion control blankets should be installed over the hydroseed. If vegetation cannot be established from seed before water is allowed in the ditch, sod should be installed in the bottom of the ditch over hydromulch and blankets.
- Retention/detention ponds should be seeded as required.
- Mulch is required at all times because it protects seeds from heat, moisture loss, and transport due to runoff.
- All disturbed areas shall be reviewed in late August to early September and all seeding should be completed by the end of September. Otherwise, vegetation will not establish itself enough to provide more than average protection.
- At final site stabilization, all disturbed areas not otherwise vegetated or stabilized shall be seeded and mulched. Final stabilization means the completion of all soil disturbing activities at the site and the establishment of a permanent vegetative cover, or equivalent permanent stabilization measures (such as pavement, riprap, gabions or geotextiles) which will prevent erosion.

Design and Installation Specifications

- Seeding should be done during those seasons most conducive to growth and will vary with the climate conditions of the region. Local experience should be used to determine the appropriate seeding periods.
- The optimum seeding windows for western Washington are April 1 through June 30 and September 1 through October 1. Seeding that occurs between July 1 and August 30 will require irrigation until 75 percent grass cover is established. Seeding that occurs between October 1 and March 30 will require a mulch or plastic cover until 75 percent grass cover is established.
- To prevent seed from being washed away, confirm that all required surface water control measures have been installed.

- The seedbed should be firm and rough. All soil should be roughened no matter what the slope. If compaction is required for engineering purposes, slopes must be track walked before seeding. Backblading or smoothing of slopes greater than 4:1 is not allowed if they are to be seeded.
- New and more effective restoration-based landscape practices rely on deeper incorporation than that provided by a simple single-pass rototilling treatment. Wherever practical the subgrade should be initially ripped to improve long-term permeability, infiltration, and water inflow qualities. At a minimum, permanent areas shall use soil amendments to achieve organic matter and permeability performance defined in engineered soil/landscape systems. For systems that are deeper than 8 inches the rototilling process should be done in multiple lifts, or the prepared soil system shall be prepared properly and then placed to achieve the specified depth.
- Organic matter is the most appropriate form of “fertilizer” because it provides nutrients (including nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) in the least water-soluble form. A natural system typically releases 2-10 percent of its nutrients annually. Chemical fertilizers have since been formulated to simulate what organic matter does naturally.
- In general, 10-4-6 N-P-K (nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium) fertilizer can be used at a rate of 90 pounds per acre. Slow-release fertilizers should always be used because they are more efficient and have fewer environmental impacts. It is recommended that areas being seeded for final landscaping conduct soil tests to determine the exact type and quantity of fertilizer needed. This will prevent the over-application of fertilizer. Fertilizer should not be added to the hydromulch machine and agitated more than 20 minutes before it is to be used. If agitated too much, the slow-release coating is destroyed.
- There are numerous products available on the market that take the place of chemical fertilizers. These include several with seaweed extracts that are beneficial to soil microbes and organisms. If 100 percent cottonseed meal is used as the mulch in hydroseed, chemical fertilizer may not be necessary. Cottonseed meal is a good source of long-term, slow-release, available nitrogen.
- Hydroseed applications shall include a minimum of 1,500 pounds per acre of mulch with 3 percent tackifier. Mulch may be made up of 100 percent: cottonseed meal; fibers made of wood, recycled cellulose, hemp, and kenaf; compost; or blends of these. Tackifier shall be plant-based, such as guar or alpha plantago, or chemical-based such as polyacrylamide or polymers. Any mulch or tackifier product used shall be installed per manufacturer’s instructions. Generally, mulches come in 40-50 pound bags. Seed and fertilizer are added at time of application.