Pike County
Conservation District

HOW TO MAKE GRASS GROW

IN PIKE COUNTY

When performing earth disturbance activities, establishing vegetation helps prevent erosion at the source. Pike County has a unique landscape that often includes very acidic and rocky soils. Follow these steps to ensure grass grows on your property.

Step 1: Whatcha workin' with?

The first thing you should do is determine what kind of soil you have in your yard.

Initial investigations can be made using the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey (http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov). Basic information about type of soil and limiting conditions can be found using the web soil survey.

WATCH OUT!

Keep an eye out for soil factors that may be difficult to work with such as highly acidic soils, high water tables, or droughty soils.

For a more detailed and descriptive assessment of your soil conditions, consider a **soil test** through Penn State Extension. Test kits can be obtained from your local Penn State Extension office.

Pike County PSU Extension Office
extension.psu.edu/pike-county
570-296-3400

Tests provide information on:

- soil acidity
- phosphorus
- potassium
- magnesium
- nitrogen

Test results provide recommendations on how much, and what form of fertilizer and lime to use for establishing and improving vegetative growth.

Step 2: Pick Your Plants

Prioritize use of **native species** when deciding what grasses, legumes, and wildflowers to plant. Native plants will be best suited grow in your local conditions. Make sure to include cover crops such as annual rye grass or winter oats to help establish fast growth to prevent erosion and sedimentation while longer lasting perennial species have time to grow.

Site conditions may dictate a different mix of seed to get ideal vegetative cover on a project site.

- Steep slopes
- Varying levels of shade
- Varying levels of moisture

are all factors that can impact what species will be best suited to a given location.

Consider consulting the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources "Landscaping with Native Plants" resources for suggestions of species to use. The Natural Resources Conservation Service plants database also provides specific plant information on tolerances to your site conditions, and growing seasons.

Step 3: Amend Soil

When you get the results of your soil test, you will generally find recommendations for fertilizer based off of the three main nutrients needed for plant growth.

3 MAIN NUTRIENTS

- Nitrogen (N)
- Phosphorus (P)
- Potassium (K)

Fertilizer packaging will list how much of these nutrients it contains by listing amounts of N, P, and K.

It is also likely there will be recommendations for the addition of lime to the soil due to high acidity that is very common in Pike County soils. Dry or low in organic material soils may also benefit from the addition of compost to the upper soil layer.

An example of a beautiful lawn and silt fence

Step 3: Stabilize!

Before full vegetative cover is achieved, ensure the site is temporarily stabilized to prevent soil erosion and sediment pollution to surface waters. Consider these basic tips for preventing soil loss during this period:

- Apply straw mulch instead of hay to prevent weed contamination in the seed mix.
- Apply straw mulch to disturbed areas at a rate of 3 tons per acre.
- For slopes that have a grade of 33% or more or areas that are within 100 feet of a surface water, use an erosion control blanket to provide additional protection from erosive forces.
- Utilize a sediment barrier such as compost filter socks or silt fences to capture eroding sediment at the bottom of slopes that are disturbed prior to stabilization.

CONTACT THE DISTRICT FOR ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE IF NEEDED FOR EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL NEEDS.

556 Route 402
Hawley PA 18428
570-226-8220
pikecd@pikepa.org

Pike County
Conservation District