



Gardeners Helping Gardeners Succeed

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Fire Site Revegetation and Cheatgrass Control

Fire Site Revegetation

Seeds, like people, are not all the same even when they have the same common group name. Not everybody sleeps, or wakes, or eats together even in the same household. The same goes for plants and their seeds. A number of seeds will sprout almost anytime when water, warm ground, and sunlight are present. These are usually annuals. Annuals grow from seed, into bloom, and produce seed all within one year. California poppies and some flax are good examples. At the end of the season it is usual to find that the seeds will not ripen in time to be of benefit for next year. Because of this you should think about over-seeding next spring should you desire more of these plants.

Other plant seeds need to have a chilling period in order to germinate. This chilling period occurs during the winter months. Most of these seeds are perennials or shrubs. Some of the seeds in this group to sprout in the fall even when winter weather is present. They can survive all winter long with some irrigation or measurable snowfall.

In order to stabilize the sites affected by fire, it is necessary to seed the affected area. It is important to add water slowly so that the water soaks in and does not run off. This will allow the seed to germinate which will help stabilize the soil affected by the fire. This will help to minimize erosion some this season and a lot next spring.

The Dryland Erosion Control Mix and Fire Erosion Mix contain a number of different types of grasses. These are clump varieties that are pet, people, and property friendly. These varieties grow well in the fall and spring months and will be the greatest asset to the site. They will root quickly and will help to crowd out cheat grass if they are watered properly and the soil is not allowed to dry out too much. They also help to turn the site green. This occurs best when you water with a sprinkler that covers a large area, such as the Hunter PGP. This sprinkler upgrades and replaces the Rainbird impact heads and come with twelve different nozzles. By adding a ring base and a shut off timer, you are ready to go.

After you apply the seed to the affected areas, it is best to add starter fertilizer, such as a 5-20-10, before raking with a hard toothed rake. After raking, water the seeded areas. In some areas water may not absorb into the soil well. By applying a soil penetrant, such as Liquid Gold, you can open up the soil to allow absorption to occur. Water every second or third day until you see some growth. This should occur in around 14-21 days.

Cheatgrass Control

After any fire we find many areas where cheatgrass moves in and becomes one of the top vegetative crops that becomes established. While the cheatgrass helps in controlling erosion it is also an excellent fuel source for another wild land fire.

There have been trials on a new pre-emergent herbicide (**Plateau**) that kills seed and allows the trees, shrubs, and perennials to thrive without competition. **Plateau** seems to allow many annuals to grow while not allowing cheatgrass to germinate. Unfortunately, this product is not available to homeowners or landscapers at this time.

There are however several other pre-emergent herbicides, which are available to control cheatgrass. The cost for these products runs about 1 to 2 cents per square foot. **Casoron** is a granular product and **Weedstopper** is the liquid equivalent pre-emergent. The major difference between these products is that Plateau seems to allow many annuals to grow while the **Casoron** and **Weedstopper** will kill these shallow rooted plants. All of these products can be applied over dirt, rock, or bark, but be sure to water them into the ground so that it will penetrate the soil where the seeds reside.

You may also want to apply a soil penetrant to help the burned and baked soil absorb the water rather than have the water puddle and roll off the surface along with your pre-emergent herbicide.

For most homes these products will run about twenty to thirty dollars a year depending upon the areas to be covered.

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