

**Seed soon or wait to dormant seed**  
**Sep 12, 2014**

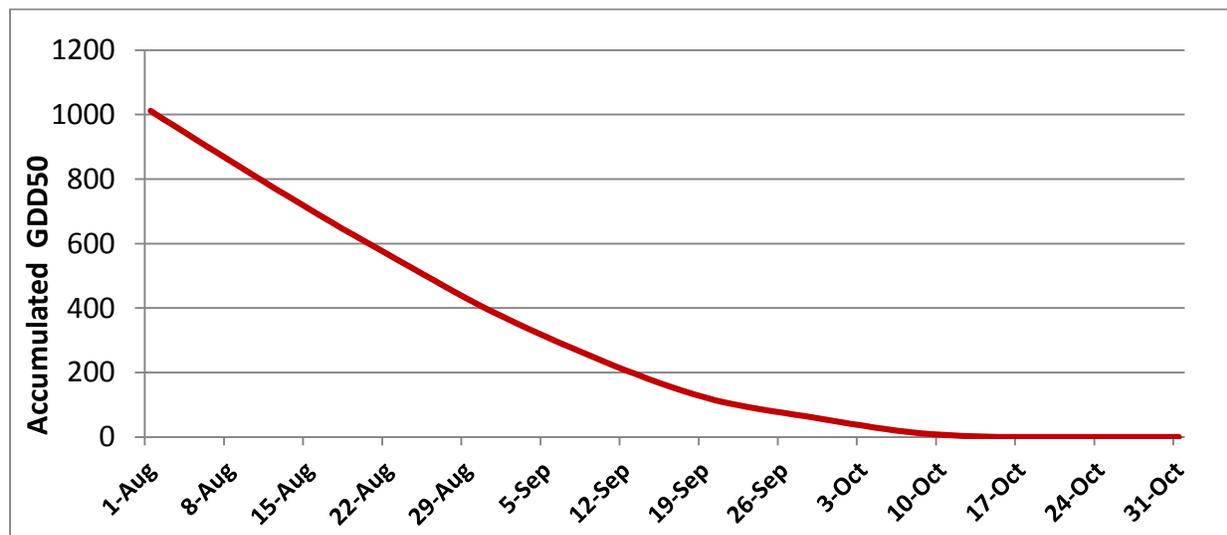
We are almost out of the preferred seeding period as our temperatures are trending down. Growing degree days (GDD) is a measure of heat units and are used to predict pest and plant growth. We often use a base of 50F, so the calculation is  $[(\text{daily high } F + \text{daily low } F)/2 - 50F]$ . Figure 1 shows the 25 year average for growing degree day accumulation and is graphed opposite of traditional, showing expected GDDs remaining this season. As of writing this on Sep 12, we expect about 220 GDD to accumulate by the end of the year compared to 708 GDD expected to accumulate from the beginning of the prime seeding window on Aug. 15. Putting GDD in practical terms, turf seeded on Aug 15 could be three and a half times more mature by winter than an identical stand seeded on Sep 12 or 20 times more mature than a stand seeded on Oct 1. This is why we always recommend seeding as early in this Aug 15 to Sep 15 window as possible. Though seeding might still be successfully done yet this fall with significant inputs and precautions, poor establishment and/or winterkill could be expected if seeding is still attempted this fall. Though some will recommend that Kentucky bluegrass or perennial ryegrass can be seeded later than tall fescue, ALL cool-season turfgrasses should be seeded by Sep 15 (or much preferably earlier) for optimum establishment by winter. The single exception would be on golf courses battling gray leaf spot. Overseeding the third week of September with perennial ryegrass is almost required to limit gray leaf spot damage on the new ryegrass seedlings. However, this comes with significant risk of winter damage on the new ryegrass with a cold fall and/or winter conditions favoring desiccation, ice cover, crown hydration, and/or direct cold temperature kill.

More information at:

Late seeding and winterkill risk: <http://turf.unl.edu/pdfctarticles/Oct2lateseeding.pdf>

Establishing lawns from seed: <http://turf.unl.edu/pdfcaextpub/Establishingturffromseed2012l.pdf>

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**Figure 1.** Remaining growing degrees days (GG50) left in the season based on 25-year averages at our turf research station in Mead NE. Annual GGD50 average about 2450. Seeding on Aug 15 should allow 708 GDD by the end of the growing season while seeding after September 15 leaves less than 170 GDD to accumulate by the end of the season.