Now is the time to start thinking about plans to plant a new lawn or even overseed an existing cool season lawn. Tall fescue is probably the most popular choice for a cool season lawn in Kansas, and although the old K-31 fescue variety remains popular, there are newer varieties that perform well in Kansas. Often those newer varieties are sold as blends, and these blends offer better quality, performance, darker color, density, finer texture, and can with stand heat, drought and disease better.

If you are wanting to seed a new lawn this fall, the first step is taking a soil test. We have a nice video on YouTube that shows how to take a good soil sample, you can search for Dickinson County KSRE on YouTube to find the video. We will test the soil for pH, phosphorus, potassium, and nitrogen which will cost around $12 per sample. Between now and the middle of August is the perfect time to begin spraying your area for any perennial grassy weeds or current lawn, and you may have to spray a couple times to ensure a good kill. Using a simple Roundup (glyphosate) and water mixture should be sufficient.

Around the middle of August, you can till the area you wish to plant and that would be the time to smooth the area or grade it for slope or drainage if necessary. Ten days or so later you can apply the recommended fertilizer and till the fertilizer into the soil to prepare for planting. Typical planting rate is 6-10 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet, plant about one-half inch deep or if broadcast on top, try to lightly cover the seed with soil to ensure good seed to soil contact. Keep the soil constantly moist until the seedlings come up, you can cover with straw to help keep the area damp. One month after planting, or roughly early to mid-October, you can fertilize with one-half pound of actual nitrogen or about 2 pounds of fertilizer product (look for nitrogen only) per 1,000 square feet. If weather is dry, be sure to water about once a week to help the lawn. You can fertilize again with 1 pound of nitrogen fertilizer product per 1,000 square feet in early November and thoroughly soak the soil before winter.

That’s quite a bit of information above for planting a new lawn so I’ll give some quick tips to try and successfully overseed your current lawn:
* mow the lawn to 1 ½ inch height
* remove all debris with a rake or lawnmower and bagger
* for large dead areas, seed at 6 to 8 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet, use a half rate (3-5 pounds) if you just want to thicken your lawn
* apply nitrogen fertilizer at a rate of 2 pounds of product (approximately 24% nitrogen) per 1,000 square feet
* Water in the seed and fertilizer thoroughly

If you have any questions about planting or reseeding your cool season lawn, please reach out to our Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, Tony Whitehair, at 785-263-2001 or tonyw@ksu.edu