



Early Sod Care The First Six Weeks

First Day Watering. The sod should be watered thoroughly as soon as it is laid. Check by walking on it. If you make deep footprints, it has enough water. If the soil is firm, lift a corner of the sod to inspect. The soil on the back of the sod should be damp to wet. If it is not damp, water for at least 30 minutes.

Second through Fifth Day Watering. Check your lawn at a minimum of once per day (more often when hot or windy). Walk on the new lawn to inspect it. If the soil is soft and you make deep footprints or water has puddles in areas, it is too wet and you should discontinue watering for awhile and water less often with less water. If the soil is firm, lift a corner of the sod in several areas. The soil should be damp, not dripping wet or dusty dry. Areas where the grass has wilted or turned a straw color indicate it has not received enough water. Seeing green grass turn brown almost overnight will get your attention! The grass did not get enough water, causing the leaves to die. The roots and crowns are still alive and in most instances, new leaves will appear in seven to ten days. Cracks that appear between the rolls indicate that not enough water has been applied and you should water longer and more often. Temperatures above 80 degrees generally mean more water is needed and below 60 degrees means less water is needed. In the cooler months of March, April, October and November, sod needs much less water.

Further Watering. After approximately five days, the soil has soaked up water like a sponge and you must reduce your watering habits or you will drown the new roots. Roots will not grow into waterlogged soils! Begin stretching out the time between the watering. Reset your timer if you have an automatic system. Begin the transition under Long Term Care instructions.

Mowing. Mow your new turf as soon as it grows enough to need it at the heights suggested under Long Term Care instructions. Sod will grow new roots best

when it is mowed regularly and at the proper height. Do not water before mowing to ensure the mower does not sink into the soft soil.

How soon can the sod be used? The sod is ready to be used instantly. The only concern is the underlying soft soil. Making deep footprints when the soil is soft will not harm the sod, but will make for an uneven lawn. If children play and turn up a corner, just pat it back down.

Weed Killers. Your sod does not require any. Should a dandelion be present, just pull it out.

Fertilization. The lawn does not need fertilizer for two weeks. You can then either hire a professional lawn service or begin a program from your local garden center.

Guarantee

Sod is guaranteed to be in good growing condition at the time of sale; following the sale it is the purchaser's responsibility. If the sod is not watered properly, it will not grow. Call us immediately at the time of closing if the sod is anything but healthy and we will give the matter prompt attention.

Long Term Care

Proper Watering. The proper way to water a mature lawn is simple, *thoroughly but infrequently*. When the soil is dry to a depth of five inches, water long enough to rewet the soil five inches deep. You need to learn two things to do this properly:

- 1). How to determine when the soil is dry five inches deep. During a dry period, dig in the soil with a garden trowel to see how deep the moisture is. An easier way to determine soil moisture levels is to purchase a soil probe. A soil probe is a metal tube with one side open and a handle on top. Use the handle to push the tube into the soil, then pull the tube out and look at the exposed soil to evaluate the moisture level. Soil probes are available from Garden Works, 51353 S.R. 933, South Bend, IN 46637, 574-272-4516 at a cost of about \$30. Moist soil is softer and darker in color. Soil dries from the top down. Grass will turn bluish color in the heat of the day as the soil dries.
- 2). How long do you have to run each zone to rewet the soil five inches deep? You have to experiment. When dry, run a zone for 60

minutes and dig in the soil 12 to 24 hours later how far down the water went. Do this for each zone. If you wet the soil deeper, or shallower, repeat the test for a different amount of time. Remember these points for each test. No two zones are the same. Each zone will dry out and take water at different rates and each zone applies water at a different rate. You can water your lawn anytime of day, but morning is a good time because there is usually less wind. Avoid, if possible, watering later afternoon or evening.

Why you can't set and forget a timer. How often you need to water depends on how fast the soil dries out. The factors that influence how fast a soil dries out are soil type, temperature, wind, amount of sunshine and cloud cover. Soils dry faster on warm, sunny, windy days than cool, cloudy and calm days. Can a sprinkler system that is set to run every few days for a few minutes take any of those factors into account? Of course not! People who set and forget a sprinkler system usually over water, which causes serious problems like diseases and nasty weeds. A lawn is more forgiving if you underwater than over water it. Besides, a mature lawn will not die if you underwater it.

Trouble shooting watering problems. Even though you have a sprinkler system, sometimes you might notice a part of your lawn that looks drier from the rest, especially during a dry period. It could be a complete zone, or just part of one. The first thing to check is how much water your system is actually applying. Use some straight sided cans, like a tuna fish can and put them in a zone that looks good and the one that looks dry. Run your system as usual and measure the amount of water in the different cans. If you find a difference in the levels, you can then identify and correct sprinkler system problems.

Mowing. From May through September, mow at 2 ½ to 3 inches high. From September through November, gradually lower the height to a final height of 2 inches. Mowing high like this results in fewer weed problems and a healthier turf.

Clippings. Clippings do not contribute to thatch production. Clippings should not be collected unless they are long and smother the grass. Leaving the clippings recycles the nutrients back onto the lawn, saving the fertilizer costs.

Fertilization. It is important to fertilize by a program, whether you hire the work done or do it yourself. Contact a lawn service or visit a garden center to get set up.

Weed Control. The first line of weed defense is to have a thick lawn that is mowed high. If you hire a lawn service, they will take care of your weeds. If you plan to do it yourself, visit your favorite garden center to select the method that is right for you.

Crabgrass and grub controls. Unfortunately, advertising has made the threats from these pests seem larger than they really are. Large sums of money are wasted and pesticides are unnecessarily added to the environment. Briefly, crabgrass is only a problem in spots where the turf is thin. You can approach control in two ways. *Spot treat* thin areas that have had crabgrass in the past in the spring before it comes up, or have a lawn service spot treat the weeks after they come up. A lawn seldom needs to be totally treated. All lawns have some grubs, but it takes more than five per square foot to cause damage. To save yourself money and protect the environment, become informed. The internet is a good place to start learning and find good links.

Aerification. The purpose of aerification is to loosen up a compacted soil. Compaction comes from two sources. New lawns can be compacted during construction and may benefit if aerified the first two years. Vehicle traffic, intense wear from dogs or under a swing set can also compact soils. Studies show that core aerification is the method that provides the most benefits and one or two passes does not accomplish much. Core aerification is not a substitute for dethatching.

Dethatching. Thatch is the layer of cocoa brown material below the leaves and above the soil. A half inch of thatch is ideal, while more than ¾ inch is excessive and will cause several lawn problems. Clippings do not add thatch. Over watering is the most common cause of excessive thatch levels.

Favorite links.

www.redhenturf.com, www.agry.purdue.edu/turf

Seeded Lawns. Consider lawn seeding the first step in establishing your yard, if it is part of your home purchase. Installation includes raking the lawn to soften the top two to three inches, after which the soil is fertilized to enhance germination. Five pounds of seed is applied per 1000 square feet. Remember that the forces of nature are far stronger than grass seed. Heavy storms can cause washouts and erosion that you will need to correct. Just as the weather cannot be controlled, all of the weed seeds that will germinate with the seed cannot be controlled.

Your lawn has been seeded with an all-purpose certified seed mixture. The blue grasses will dominate in the sunny areas and the fescue grass will dominate in the shaded area. The rye grass will be the first to appear. It will take about 30 days for all seed to germinate.

You may need to over-seed at some point, perhaps more than once. Keep the seed moist, not wet. How well you water your new lawn will determine the percentage of germination and initial thickness of the stand. If the new seedlings are allowed to dry out, they will die. The more this happens, the less grass you will have. If the seed has not yet germinated, water every day, but only lightly to the point before it puddles. When the water starts to stand or run off, move your sprinkler to another area, remember the importance of this type of watering for the first 30 days. As your lawn gets established, change your watering to longer intervals and not as often. The deeper your grass roots, the healthier your grass will be and longer periods of watering and not as often, will promote this. People with automatic sprinkler systems tend to over-water established lawns. One and a half inches of water per week should be sufficient. Lawns can be watered anytime before 3pm. Watering in the early evening extends the night dampness, which can cause disease. A good time to water is early in the morning.

Crab Grass Control. Apply crab grass control only in the Spring and only if you are not going to over seed to thicken the lawn.

Fertilization. Feeding your new lawn, as well as an established lawn, is very important. Your new lawn should be fertilized every five weeks during the first year

with 12-12-12 fertilizer. using a broadcast type spreader. Make sure the grass blades are dry. Your spreader should be set to fertilize 10 to 12 pounds per thousand square feet. This method of fertilizing should be used at 4 to 6 week intervals throughout the first growing season, to establish a good strand of grass. You will need to participate in a fertilizer program whether you do it yourself, or hire it out. If you decide to fertilize you own lawn, it is recommended that you participate in a program through one of the area farm feeds or landscape stores. For example, *Garden Works Feed & Garden Center*, located at 51353 State Road Highway 933 North, South Bend, has an excellent program. They will sell you the type of fertilizer you need and will tell you when and how to apply it.

Mowing. Mow your new lawn when the grass reaches 2 ½ inches in height (approximately 30 days) in early Spring and Fall mow your lawn from 1 to 1 ½ inches high. From the first of May through September 15th, mow from 2 ½ to 3 ½ inches high. Clippings do not have to be bagged unless they are long and smother the grass. Clippings do not add thatch and return nutrients to the soil.

