



Home Owner Guide to Sod Care

First day watering. The sod should be soaked with water as soon as it is laid. Water each zone or section 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 a least 30 minutes.

Second through fifth day watering. Check your lawn at least one time per day, or more than once if it is hot or windy. Walk on the new lawn to inspect it. If the soil is soft and you make deep footprints, or water has puddle in the areas, it is too wet. You should stop watering for a while, and water less often, with less water. If the soil is firm, lift a corner of the sod in several places. The soil should be damp, not dripping wet, or dusty dry. Watch the color of the sod. Green is good. Blue-green indicates not enough water, and you will have problems in 12-24 hours. Yellow-tan means the sod is heat/moisture stressed and will go dormant. The roots and crowns are still alive and if you water more, new leaves will appear in seven to ten days. Cracks that appear between the rolls indicate not enough water has been applied, and you should water longer or more often. Temperatures above 80 F. Generally mean more water is needed and below 60 F means less water is needed.

Further watering. After five days of so, 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 brow into waterlogged soils. Begin stretching out the time between waterings. Rest your timer if you have an automatic system.

Mowing. Mow your new turf as soon as it grows enough to need it. Follow the guidelines outlined in the long term care section of this pamphlet. Sod will grow new roots best when it is mowed regularly and at the proper height. Arrange it so you do not water just before mowing, so the mower will 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 how soft the underlying soil is. Making deep footprints when the soil is soft will not hurt the sod, but will make for an uneven lawn.

Long Term Turf Care

Long-term watering: the correct way. The correct way to water a mature lawn is simple: water thoroughly, but infrequently. Watering deeply encourages the grass roots to grow more deeply into the soil, making the grass more heat and drought tolerant. Over water causes serious turf problems and can lead to disease and unwanted weeds. A lawn is more forgiving if you underwater than over water it.

Mowing. Mow your turf at 2 ½ to 3 inches high. Mowing at this height will result in fewer weeds and a healthier turf, as well as less need for watering, as the soil is

better shaded by longer turf. 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 fertilizer costs.

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

Aerification. The purpose of aerification is to loosen up compacted soils. Compaction comes from two sources. New lawns can become compacted during construction and may benefit if aerated the first two years. Vehicle traffic, intense wear from dogs and under a swing set can also compact soils. Studies show that core aerification is the method that provides the most benefits, and at least two passes is a must.

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