



Care of Newly Sodded Lawns

1. Start watering **IMMEDIATELY** after the sod is installed.

- a. Water frequently and thoroughly for the first 7 to 10 days. When adequately watered, the sod will feel soft when you walk on it. In hot, dry weather, this will mean sprinkling each area every day. In cool moist weather, sprinkling may be necessary only every other day, every third day or not at all after the initial watering.
- b. The proper amount of water will cause the sod to be completely moist and penetrate the underlying soil a couple of inches.
- c. If too much water is applied, the ground will be soggy and footsteps will leave indentations. If insufficient water is applied, the sod will first turn a light gray-green color as it wilts, and then turns brown. The proper amount of water will cause the ground to be a little soft, but will still permit foot traffic. Make sure that when watering, there is an overlapping pattern, to avoid dry spots. Pay particular attention to the edges, which dry out quickly.

2. Frequently Asked Questions:

- a. **What time of day is it best to water?** Ideally, watering early in the day allows the sun and wind to dry the grass blades while their roots are irrigated. Watering at night can encourage disease, which spreads in damp conditions. There will be less evaporation if the watering is done during a time of day that is not hot and windy. Some literature suggests that there is a danger of burning tender grass if watering is done in hot sunny weather. We have never seen this happen and we have done a great deal of watering in all kinds of weather. Many municipalities have watering restrictions. These typically do not apply to new landscape planting.
- b. **When can our new sod be mowed?** Once the sod has rooted into the ground and is approximately 3 inches high it should be mowed. This is typically 10 days to 2 weeks after installation. After it has been mowed, continue watering deeply but less frequently, to encourage the grass to develop a strong root system. Deeply rooted grass will withstand stressful environments.
- c. **Are there any precautions to be aware of before the first mowing?** Allow the lawn to dry sufficiently for the mower to pass over it without leaving ruts (usually

24 hours without water is enough time). Be sure to set your mower to a high setting, about 3", and mow the sod very carefully. You don't want to cut off more than about 1 inch of new grass. Clippings should be caught with a grass catcher, or removed to avoid smothering the tender sod. It is important not to wait too long and allow the grass to get too tall before the first mowing. Removing more than 1" of growth can "shock" the grass.

- d. **What about after the first cutting?** After the first cutting the sod should be knitted down (rooted) and the watering can be reduced. Allow the ground to dry slightly and then water deeply. One inch of water per week in the form of rain or sprinkling is recommended. It is best to apply this water in one or two applications rather than several light sprinklings. The object is to keep as little moisture as possible on the surface where the shallow rooted weeds like to grow. At the same time, you want to encourage the grass roots to grow deeply to seek moisture. Water regularly until Thanksgiving.

3. **Helpful Hints:**

- a. Never water by hand if you can use a sprinkler. Not many people have the time or patience to hold a hose for as long as is usually needed.
- b. When setting sprinklers, start with the furthest point in the yard. Moving the sprinkler may be accomplished by pulling on the hose rather than walking in the freshly watered area.
- c. Be sure that the corners and edges are thoroughly covered. Overlap settings so that there are no gaps in the areas being watered.
- d. Use timers to shut the water off if you are not available to do so manually.
- e. To get a feel for how long it takes to water, use a rain gauge, coffee can, or straight-sided jar set under a sprinkler to see how long it takes to apply one inch of water.

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