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Caring for a Newly Sodded Lawn

WATERING SOD

Keep the sod constantly moist until the first mowing.

How Often: In hot, dry weather, this will mean watering each area daily. In cool, moist weather, watering may be necessary only every second or third day

How Much: It is important to give a newly sodded lawn immediate and constant attention. The sod has to be thoroughly wet down to the soil beneath. Light watering does more harm than good. Soak the sod thoroughly so that when any corner of the sod is lifted, it will be dripping wet. Use this test several places in the lawn and especially on the edges near borders and sidewalks, these are the areas that dry out first.

If sod is allowed to dry out, the strips will shrink and leave gaps which will not return to original size. The sod must make contact with the soil beneath. Water heavily for ten days and then reduce watering.

Make frequent inspections to determine the moisture content of the soil. Gently lift an edge of a sod strip. If it is making good contact with the soil, you will see many strong white roots and lifting the strip will be difficult.

Although lawn establishment is faster with sod than with seeding, it is not “instant”. Care must be taken to keep traffic off the new lawn until

sod starts to root as it can cause sinking and uneven contact. Light walking across the lawn can begin one week, but wait a month before heavier usage.

MOWING

A newly sodded lawn will not produce much top growth at first and does not need mowing immediately. The mower height should be set at 2 ½ inches or taller. However, newly laid sod may not have a firm base and should not be mowed when the soil is saturated or soft. A lower setting could produce scalping and put the grass in a condition of shock. Riding mowers and lawn tractors should not be used when the sod is soft. A sharp blade on your mower is always beneficial to your turf. Care should be taken not to leave a mats of grass clippings on the new sod. Mulching mowers work well or rake of mats of grass clippings to avoid smothering tender sod.

After the First Cutting: Continue to keep the sod slightly moist until the fourth cutting at which point you can begin to treat it like any established lawn. Supply 1 inch of water per week in the form of rain or irrigation. It is better to apply 1 inch in applications rather than several light cycles.

The object is to keep as little moisture as possible on the surface where the shallow root weeds like to grow. At the same time, the grass roots are forced to penetrate deep to seek moisture.

If possible, avoid watering late in the evening or setting automatic irrigation systems on night

watering. Turf that is wet during cool or humid evenings is more prone to foliar diseases. Time watering's for early mornings so the sun will dry the blade surface and not allow spores from fungus to germinate and develop.

FERTILIZING:

A healthy lawn is one that has a balanced proportion of top growth to root growth. Roots of newly laid sod have been sheared and therefore reestablishment of a solid root system is very important. Do not apply a fertilizer which is high in nitrogen. High quantities of nitrogen encourage heavy top growth rather than root development. Without a well-developed root system, grass is more prone to diseases and stress during adverse weather conditions. Before placement, your sod had been grown under optimum conditions with proper fertilization. At the time of placement, the topsoil beneath was treated with a slow release starter fertilizer. Therefore, immediate fertilization is not needed.

After 4 to 6 weeks, apply a fertilizer which contains a high percentage of slow release nitrogen.

A yearly fertilizer program on an established lawn 3 to 4 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet which is applied in several applications. Nitrogen (N) is nutrient need in the largest quantities followed by potassium (K) and phosphorus (P). Avoid fertilizing the lawn in the heat of the summer. A slow release fertilizer will reduce danger of fertilizer burn and overstimulation of top growth.

Your first application of the season should not occur before mid-May. Subsequent applications should follow at 6 weeks intervals. Skip the midsummer application if your lawn will not be irrigated.

Fall fertilizer applications are the most important. Feeding at this time helps the grass make use of this season of ideal sunlight,

moisture, and temperature. This is when turf grasses are growing most actively, strengthening their roots, and tillering to develop new plants, which will fill in weak areas of the lawn. Lawns such as these are more resistant to all pests.

Late Fall Fertilization: New shoot growth has stopped at this time of the year, but the grass roots are storing up food reserves. Fertilizer applied after you have stopped mowing for the season provides the energy for grass to survive harsh winter conditions and recuperate in spring with a health, gradual green-up.

All newly sodded lawns should be core aerified annually beginning the season following installation. Aerating annually and watering during times of drought will help prevent a serious disease of lawns called necrotic ring spot. **Necrotic Ring Spot** is often found in newly sodded lawns that have not been aerated and 10-15 year old seeded lawns that have developed heavy thatch layers.