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## TM-1 New Lawn Installation

### Key Points

- Sodding
- Soil conditioning is just as important for sodding as for seeding.
- Lay sod immediately after delivery, keep moist until sod is knitted.
- Cool hot surfaces before laying sod with water on a hot day.
- Determine a straight line to start the first course and refer to this line to keep sod lined up straight.

### Seeding

- Use good seed; sow in two directions and mulch very lightly.
- Keep new lawns moist, not wet until grass seed is established.

### Benefits of Sod

In recent years, establishing lawns by sodding has become popular. Sodding is desirable where complete cover is needed immediately and on steep slopes. Specialized turf farms produce sod of several turfgrass species.

Sodding costs more than seeding but results in an “instant” lawn. The real advantage is that you needn’t face the problems and time involved in turf establishment – the sod producer and landscape installer do that for you. The grass in the sod field should be freshly mowed and weed-free.

### Soil Preparation

Careful soil preparation is the key to a quality, long lived, healthy lawn. A sodded lawn requires the same soil preparation as a seeded lawn. Areas to be sodded or seeded should have phosphorous and potash tilled into the soil. Special attention should be made to avoid the common interface when topsoil is placed on top of the existing soil and sod or seed is then planted.

The area to be seeded or sodded should be thoroughly rototilled as deep as possible. Clean up any rocks uncovered and other debris. If topsoil is needed, spread one half over the site and rototill in with 2 to 3 inches of organic material. If no topsoil is needed just till the 2 to 3 inches of compost into the existing previously tilled soil.

Establish your final grade after removing rocks turned up by rototilling a second time. Use a steel rake for this final grading. In a large area a piece of chain link fence or wooden drag can be helpful in leveling. Take your time to get proper drainage away from the house, smooth out high and low spots. Once lawn is in, grade is difficult to change. Add the last one half of topsoil (if needed) and spread evenly without changing the grade just established. This process of rototilling, adding compost, adding topsoil, rototilling and finishing with this final topsoil will provide a nice transition between the original soil and topsoil additions. Simply placing 2 to 3 inches of topsoil over the existing topsoil will create two distinct layers (old soil/new soil) which affects water infiltration and deep rooting.

Sod can be applied any time the ground isn’t frozen; however, sufficient water is critical. For sodding during hot, dry periods, you’ll need irrigation equipment capable of keeping the sod continually moist. The best times to seed are spring or fall.

### Steps for Laying Sod

1. Lay sod immediately – don’t allow it to remain stacked and rolled for more than two days, and then only when absolutely necessary. Take care to protect it from sun.
2. Lay sod on moistened soil. Stagger the joints and fit the pieces as closely together as possible. Lay sod lengthwise across slopes. Use short wooden pegs spaced one foot apart to anchor sod on a slope.

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3. Soak the turf immediately after laying the sod and water it daily (unless it rains) until the sod is firmly rooted into the soil (2 to 3 weeks). Once the turf is established, treat the sodded area as you would any established lawn.

#### **Steps for Seeding**

1. Sow the seed in two directions at right angles to each other. Apply correct amount of seed as directed on seed package. Use certified seed for our cool season turfgrass zone: bluegrass, perennial rye, turf type tall fescue or red fescue.
2. Lightly rake the seed in and roll lightly.
3. Add a very thin (1/4" or less) layer of mulch over new seeds. This will hasten germination by keeping soil moist and protect new seedlings. The mulch cover should be thin enough to expose the seeds to light which they require for germination.
4. Water thoroughly. Improper watering causes more failures in a newly seeded lawn than any other one factor. The top 2 inches must stay constantly moist. Soak thoroughly after seeding and then as many as three or four light sprinklings per day. More watering may be required if it is hot and windy.
5. Seeding is done in spring or fall until September 15th. Usually, the fall is the most favorable time. Seeding can be successful during the warmer summer if irrigation is carefully monitored.

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