



Installing and Maintaining a Sod Lawn

Turfgrass is one of nature's sponges, trapping chemical and air pollutants and converting noxious gasses into clean oxygen. Sodding your lawn allows you to enjoy the beauty of a living turfgrass carpet instantly without the usual time-consuming hassles of seeding. Sod can be installed anytime the ground isn't frozen. It offers more dependable results on hillsides and steep slopes where erosion is a problem and on high-traffic areas. Compared to spring seedings, sod gives little opportunity for weed species, especially crabgrass, to get established.

For best results, sod needs to be installed and maintained properly.

Preparing the Soil

1. Rototill or spade the soil to a depth of 4 inches.
2. Remove sticks, stones, roots and other debris.
3. Take soil test samples and follow recommendations.
4. In accordance with the soil test, mix lime into the top 4 inches of topsoil and complete fertilizer into the upper inch.
5. Smooth the soil by raking with a steel rake.
6. Firm the soil by lightly rolling. Fill in any low spots and grade down high points. A smooth, flat surface prevents later scalping by the mower.

NOTE: Avoid shady areas. Sod requires 4 to 5 hours of direct sunlight per day to thrive.

Measuring and Ordering Turf

1. Using a tape measure, measure the area (length, width, any unusual features), and put these measurements on a sketch.
2. Ideally, take delivery on the day you plan to start laying your sod and use all the sod delivered that day. However, any sod not installed should be unrolled in a shady area and lightly watered to prevent heating.

Laying Quality Turf

1. Start at a straight line, such as a driveway or walk.
2. Lay out the sod as you would a rug or tiles.
3. Make sure all joints are butted together, without overlap or spaces between strips of sod.
4. Stagger the joints in each new row like rows of bricks.
5. Use a large, sharp knife for shaping sod around trees, at flower beds, or along borders.
6. Completely soak the sod with at least 1 inch of water. Start watering 20 minutes after first strip is laid.
7. Roll the sod to smooth out small bumps and air pockets. This will assure good contact with the soil.

Watering Schedule

1. To gauge watering, simply place an empty can about 6 feet away from the sprinkler.
2. When there is one inch of water in the can, it is time to move the sprinkler to the next area.
Sod requires roughly one inch of water per week.
3. Reflected sun along buildings dries sod quickly, so be sure to water these areas more often.

Mowing

1. Your new sod carpet generally needs mowing 6 to 7 days after installation.
2. Never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade during a single mowing.
3. Mow when grass height reaches 2½ – 3 inches.
4. Set your mower at a cutting height of 2 inches.
5. To keep your lawn looking its best, be sure to keep your mower blades sharp.

Traffic Caution

1. Use your newly sodded lawn sparingly until roots are well-established (2–3 weeks).
2. Avoid concentrated play activities or similar rough use for four weeks.
3. There are no restrictions on visually enjoying your beautiful new lawn!

Fertilizing

1. To maintain its high quality, sod should be fertilized at least 2 times during the year. Spring and fall applications are popular for many lawns. An additional summer fertilization will help ensure a season long beauty.
2. Contact the UNH Cooperative Extension Info Line (tollfree, **1-877-398-4769**, weekdays, 9AM - 2PM) for more specific fertilizer and lawn maintenance recommendations.

Original fact sheet by John Roberts, UNH Cooperative Extension Turf specialist; updated 2/01

Visit our website: ceinfo.unh.edu

UNH Cooperative Extension programs and policies are consistent with pertinent Federal and State laws and regulations on non-discrimination regarding age, color, handicap, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veterans status.