

# Turfgrass Establishment

There are several things to consider when purchasing and installing sod. First and foremost is buying the [right grass](#) for your use and location. Some factors to consider when choosing a grass species and/or variety are amount of shade, traffic, level of care, desired quality, cold and drought tolerance.

## Measure

Using a tape, measure the lawn area where sod will be installed. Make a sketch of the area with the measurements of the area where you plan to establish your lawn. Include the dimensions of sidewalks, parking areas, shrub beds and buildings. They will influence the total amount of sod you need to order. Once you have all of the measurements, calculate the total square footage of lawn area. If you are not sure how to do this, take your drawing and measurements to a local sod supplier. They can help you calculate just how much sod you will need to order.

There are 9 square feet in a "yard" of sod, so if you have 3,500 square feet of lawn area to plant you will need to order at least 388 yards of sod.  $3,500 / 9 = 388$ . Many companies only sell sod in units of 50 yards per pallet.

## Soil Preparation

Get your [soil tested](#) to determine the nutritional status of your soil. Results will also help you determine what soil amendments are needed to ensure a healthy, mature lawn.

Remove all grass and weeds in preexisting lawn. Roto-till the soil to ensure good sod to soil contact. After tilling, begin soil work to eliminate drainage problems (slope away from house, garage, etc.) and low areas in your lawn. Add organic amendments as needed based on your soil test results. Lightly till the soil and amendments to a depth of 4 to 5 inches. Rake the soil smooth and remove all rocks, large soil clods, and plant roots/sod chunks. Be sure to keep the soil level about 1 inch below sidewalks or the driveway.

## Order and Schedule Delivery

Order your selected sod from a local sod retailer and schedule delivery after all soil preparation is completed and you are ready to install. All sod should be planted the day of delivery. Quick installation is crucial to ensuring a healthy lawn. The longer grass sits on a pallet the more likely it is to die, or take longer to establish.

## Installation

Install sod immediately after delivered. Begin installing sod along a driveway or sidewalk, pushing edges together tightly without stretching. Use a sharp knife, spade or machete to trim edges of sod to fit the landscape. Be sure to stagger joints of the sod in a brick-like (running bond) pattern to avoid continuous seams. Always place sod across steep slopes and stake in place if needed. Do not place small pieces of sod along outside edges. They will dry out and die. Begin watering sod within 30 minutes of installation. In hot weather, place unused sod in the shade and keep it moist until it is laid in the landscape. After a light watering, roll the sod with a roller to ensure good sod to soil contact.



## **Watering**

Water new sod as soon as possible after installation. Professional sod companies commonly have a person hand watering sod as soon as it is laid. Water at least once per day during the first two weeks after installation. Use enough water to keep the sod and soil moist but not soaking wet. Make sure the sod and upper soil profile remain moist throughout the day. Be extra cautious during hot, dry and windy weather. Sod can quickly dry out. Proper watering will ensure good turf rooting into the soil. As soon as the new grass is well rooted (cannot pull grass from soil) begin a deep and infrequent watering program to promote a deep and healthy root system.

## **Maintaining The New Lawn**

Until a new lawn has a fully established root system, avoid heavy use. Mow grass as soon as it starts growing. Make sure that you have a newly sharpened blade. Mow at the correct height for the grass. Scalping is not uncommon in newly planted lawns. If a scalped area does not clear up on its own after two or three mowings, you probably have an unlevel place in the lawn. Adding a light application of a sandy loam soil to the depression will help fill in and reduce the scalping. For deeper depressions, it may be easier to dig up the grass, fill in the depression and then replant. Remember to water deeply and infrequently, mow often with a sharpened mower, and watch for insect, disease or fertility problems.