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INSTALLING AND MAINTAINING A SOD LAWN

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.

Preparing the Soil.

1. Rototill or spade the soil to a depth of 4 inches.
2. Remove sticks, stones, roots and other debris.
3. Mix pelletized lime and compost into the top 4 inches of topsoil. Pelletized lime will spread easier than powdered lime.
4. Smooth out the soil, knocking down any high areas and filling any low ones, with a steel rake.
5. Firm the soil by lightly rolling. A smooth, flat surface prevents later scalping of the sod by the mower.

Measuring and Ordering Sod

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 Sod Properly

1. Apply starter fertilizer with a spread just before you begin to lay sod.
2. Start at a straight line, such as a driveway or walk.
3. Layout the sod as you would a rug or tiles.
4. Make sure all joints are butted together, without overlap or spaces between strips of sod.
5. Stagger the joints in each new row like rows of bricks.
6. Use a sharp (utility) knife for shaping sod around trees, at flower beds, or along borders.
7. Completely soak the sod with at least 1 inch of water. Start watering 20 minutes after the first strip of sod is laid. Take extra care to hit all edges of the sod, especially near paving.
8. 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 under the sprinkler.
2. Water in the morning with ½ to 1 inch (or approximately 15-30 minutes) everyday for the first 7-14 days. (DO NOT LET SOD DRY OUT)
3. For the next 3 weeks, water twice per week with 1 to 1½ inches of water.
4. After 4 weeks, water 2 to 3 times per week with 1 inch of water.
5. Water requirements for optimum growth of established lawns are approximately 1 inch of water every 4 to 7 days and 2 inches during drought periods.

Mowing

1. New sod 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 to 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 4 weeks.

Fertilizing

1. To maintain its high quality, sod should be fertilized at least 2 times during the year. A program of three applications (spring, summer and fall) is very successful.