



# Sod Care Guide



## Contents

Controlling Weeds.....	2
Preparing the Area for Install.....	3
Installing the Sod .....	4
Day of Delivery/What to Expect.....	4
Watering & Maintenance Practices .....	5
Watering & Maintenance Practices: Days 1-10.....	5
Watering & Maintenance Practices: Days 10-21 .....	6
Watering & Maintenance Practices: Week 3 & After .....	7
Other Tips on New Sod Care .....	8
Types of Irrigation.....	9
Shade Concerns .....	9
Fertilizing.....	10

## Weed Control

While many grass varieties will eventually crowd out weeds, it's still good practice to minimize weed growth before you start putting down sod. Areas that receive new topsoil or have been reworked and will be receiving more water with grass are prone to new weed growth where weeds may not have been growing in the past. There are several ways to help control this including pulling weeds manually, using a sod cutter, or using herbicides such as Round-Up to kill and remove weeds and then tilling the area. Please note, if the weeds are already developing seed heads and you till those into the ground, you are essentially re-planting the seeds. In this instance, the sod cutter may be a better choice. You will still need to use seasonal pre-emergents in the future to help minimize/prevent weeds seasonally.

Applying Round-Up is the best way to ensure that you rid the area of any potential weed issues before the sod is installed. Do NOT use Roundup 365, as this is a time-released product that will continue to release throughout an entire year. Just use the standard, classic Round-Up product. You only need to wait 48 hours after the product is applied before you can lay the sod safely.

***\*\* When applying herbicides, fungicides, pre-emergents, or any chemicals to your lawn, please follow the instructions and warnings on the labels carefully. The label is the law. Further, please check the label(s) to ensure you are using the correct product for your variety of sod and/or that the product(s) are safe on any trees, shrubs, or plants that you have planted in the area.***

**\*For more information on common weeds and herbicides, please visit the links:**

[Aggie Turf PDF](#)

[Weeds of Texas Turf with Pictures](#)

[Earth-Wise Guide to Weeds](#)

## Preparing the Area for Install

It's important that the area is graded as level as possible and sloping away from your home. Low areas that will keep grass submerged during irrigation or rainfall can stress the grass and prevent strong roots. In some cases, you may need to install a drainage system to divert excess water from a problem area to an area that could use water. Gradual slopes that lead away from your property and out to the street are recommended for ideal water flow.

Grass will need adequate soil to thrive and the deeper the depth of the soil the better. Ideally, your area will consist of a minimum of 4-6" of topsoil before hitting rock or any other inorganic base. Insufficient topsoil depth will result in shallow roots and require more frequent watering for your grass to stay healthy after establishment. Avoid any topsoil with more than 40% compost or other organic material, as the high nitrogen component can burn the grass, especially in hotter temperatures.

For more information on grading and controlling drainage issues, please visit the link:

[How to Level Your Lawn Area](#)

## Installing the Sod

Before you lay the sod, rake the soil to make sure the surface is level and close to 1 inch below any paved spots, such as a sidewalk. In the summer months, you can lightly wet the area to cool the ground before laying down the grass. Avoid getting the soil too wet and creating a muddy surface that inhibits a manageable work area.

**Once the fresh grass is delivered to your site, it's important to have it installed within 12-24 hours.** Leaving sod stacked on pallets or sitting in the heat on concrete is a quick way to stress the grass. During summer months, it's especially critical to get the grass down and watered on the same day. Some varieties, such as Bermuda, may begin to yellow on the day of delivery when the temperatures are above 90° F, but will green back up during the first week of adequate watering.

Line up your first row of sod along a straight line, such as a sidewalk or fence. If you don't have any straight lines in your yard, use a string stretched between two stakes. The next rows should be set out in "brickwork" fashion and not like a checkerboard to minimize the seams lining up, if possible. Use a sharp tool to cut the sod pieces as necessary to fill in irregular areas or gaps. The grass rows should fit snugly against one another without overlapping or leaving space between.

## Day of Delivery/What to Expect

Timely installation of your new sod is imperative to its establishment and starting on the day of delivery is optimal. The longer the sod sits on a pallet, the higher the stress that it will face post-installation. You will notice that the further you get down in the pallet, the more discoloration you will see, especially in the hotter months and/or after the day of delivery. The Grass Outlet does not paint its grass green as some nurseries and box store chains do, which allows our customers to better gauge the overall health of their grass during and after installation.

It is not unusual for the sod to stress some after being harvested & transported, especially in the summer months. Typical signs of normal stress are some yellowing or

discoloration, blade shrinkage, and some dryness. We do add an extra layer to the top of each pallet because these pieces are more exposed to the elements and will stress more. Occasionally these pieces do not establish. Installing any of the stressed pieces in a less visible area and giving those extra attention when watering is recommended.

Further, it is not abnormal for some pieces to be misshapen, have varying soil depth, have some roots exposed, and/or be difficult to install without some breakage. Please proceed to lay all of the sod and get it all watered in. As long as the sod is installed in a timely manner & on good, loosened soil, these pieces will take root and fill in with proper watering.

If you still have a concern, be sure to contact us **on the day of delivery** by visiting the link below, or by calling our office. You may also click the “Email Your Concern” link and email straight from this PDF. Make sure to take & upload some pictures of your concern, including a few closeups and a few wide-angle photos reflecting the quantity of sod that is of concern.

**Please be sure to continue to install the sod so that you can complete the install the day of delivery & proceed to get the sod rolled & watered in.** Your concerns submission, along with your photos, will be forwarded to our concerns department and our farm manager. Our team will investigate the issue & work with you towards solutions.

Additionally, if a problem is deemed excessive to the extent that it will inhibit grass establishment, the issue will be escalated and we will reach out with any information on a refund, credit, product shipment, or replacement sod, should any of these apply.

[Submit a Concern](#)

[Email Your Concern](#)

## Watering & Maintenance Practices

Watering & Maintenance Practices: Days 1-10

Proper and thorough watering in of newly installed grass is the most critical factor for it to establish strong roots and thrive. The area underneath the sod needs to stay saturated to a depth of 1 inch for the first three weeks after installation and can be phased down over the next month to a normal seasonal watering schedule for your area. You may check this depth by using a garden spade or screwdriver and pressing it straight down into the soil under the sod pieces. If it goes down easily about an inch, you are good! If it does not, you will need to increase your watering time immediately to minimize any stress.

If temperatures are above 65 ° F and sunny, you may need to increase your watering schedule, either by duration or to twice a day waterings, to ensure the soil is staying wet to the depth of an inch & moist to a depth of 3 to 4 inches at all times.

Make sure you keep a close eye on your sod during the first week. If an area starts to turn brown, it's most likely not getting enough water. Brown grass does not mean the grass is dead, it only indicates that the leaves have died. If you catch this early enough and adjust the amount of water to that area, you'll likely see new green leaves emerge in seven to ten days.

Do NOT fertilize or mow your lawn at this time. Also, please minimize traffic as much as possible.

## Watering & Maintenance Practices: Days 10-21

Water the sod at least every other day for about 30-45 minutes. By watering for longer periods of time, you are encouraging the roots to grow deeper into the soil. Again, if temperatures are above 65° F and sunny, you may need to increase your watering schedule, either by duration or to daily waterings.

Please make sure you are watering adequately. You can do so by pulling back the corner of the sod in several different places throughout the lawn to make sure the soil

underneath is staying moist. It should be difficult to pull the sod up at this point - do NOT force it up. You do not want to uproot your new sod, just give it a gentle tug. If the sod does easily pull up and/or you do not see small, white roots emerging from the backs of the sod, you will want to continue to water every single day, as instructed for days 1-10.

In the growing months, you should begin to notice your grass growing during this time and you can begin to mow. Please make sure not to mow more than a third of the blade at a time. For example, if the sod is now 5" tall, do not cut the grass below 3.5" height. In general, you will want to keep the sod around 2.75" - 3.5" tall during the establishment period. Do not water the lawn before you mow, and if the yard is too wet, please skip a day of watering before you mow.

## Watering & Maintenance Practices: After Day 21

At this point, your lawn should be fairly well rooted and can handle normal wear & tear. Please refer to the recommended mowing height for your specific variety by visiting our website. You can find this by clicking on the tab for your specific variety & looking under the "Performance" section:

### [Performance: Mowing Height](#)

You should be watering the lawn approximately twice a week, making sure to apply at least 1" of water per watering, depending on temperatures & variety. You can use a pie tin or similar container to measure your irrigation by placing it in a flat area close to one of your sprinklers.

Six weeks after installation, you may go ahead and apply a balanced seasonal turf fertilizer, such as [Scotts Turf Builder](#). If you decide to apply the fertilizer yourself, please make sure to follow the instructions on the label carefully. We recommend using a rotary spreader as opposed to a drop spreader. Please look for a fertilizer that has a

nutrient of 3:1:2, which indicates the amount of nitrogen (3), phosphorous (1), and potassium (2).

Avoid using herbicides when it is very hot and dry, wait for cooler temperatures unless absolutely necessary. You can avoid/reduce weed issues during hot weather by using seasonal pre-emergents before weeds emerge in order to hinder weed seeds from germinating in your soil:

[How to Kill Weeds Before They Bloom](#)

## Other Tips on New Sod Care

Sod is a living product and must be carefully installed the day of delivery and will rely on continuing maintenance, especially in the first few weeks, to ensure its success of installation & establishment. Please be sure to follow the recommended watering guidelines and other important tips within this PDF

- Light foot traffic to move sprinklers is fine but keep non-essential foot traffic to an absolute minimum during the initial establishment period to avoid root damage.
- If the edges between the sod pull apart or are separating, you are NOT applying enough water. The sod is shrinking due to dehydration and is pulling apart.
- Watering at night, particularly during seasonal cooling and shady areas, can create conditions favorable for fungus issues.
- Make sure to water more along pavement, concrete, stone, or like surfaces, particularly in hotter weather, as the sod will “fry” next to these hot surfaces, especially during the establishment period.
- Lawn areas in the full sun, on a slope, or along the edges will need extra attention when watering, especially during the hotter months. Generally, if your grass is wilted or discolored after installation, it's a sure sign of needing more water.



## Types of Irrigation

Many irrigation systems are different and watering times needed to ensure proper establishment will vary. Automatic underground systems are ideal and must be checked prior to installation for proper operation and uniform coverage. Any areas not being adequately reached will suffer.

Manual and handheld watering is not recommended unless it's used supplementary to the automatic system. If the primary source of watering is by manually moving a sprinkler or handheld water hose, much more daily focus will be needed for full and adequate coverage to all areas of your lawn.

\*It's important to note that all irrigation systems are different and recommended watering times will vary. It's imperative that grass be checked across the area to determine adequate watering times for an individual lawn. Also, if you have an irrigation system with separate stations, water times should be per individual station and not a total between all of them.

## Shade Concerns

If you are planting a shade-tolerant sod variety in a shaded area, be sure that it's getting at least a few hours of good, filtered sunlight. All shady yards differ as to the amount and length of filtered sunlight getting through. If you notice your yard starting to thin out and disappear in shadier areas, it is most likely needing more sunlight.

All grass varieties grown on our farms are on a fertilizer and weed maintenance program. If the soil your grass is installed on hasn't been treated for weed prevention, you may notice weeds trying to emerge from underneath the grass. These can be pulled out manually by the root or treated later with an herbicide if a bigger problem arises.

Please visit the following links to read about shade-tolerant varieties:

[GROWING GRASS IN THE SHADE](#)

[Turfgrass Selection for Texas](#)

## Fertilizing

Fertilizer applications during the establishment phase aren't recommended other than a low nitrogen starter fertilizer to help root establishment and give a boost for growth. After establishment, seasonal weed control and fertilizer applications by variety are recommended to keep your lawn in optimal shape. For more information on maintaining your lawn, please visit our website at:

[The Grass Outlet: Fertilizing](#)

[LAWN FERTILIZATION IN TEXAS](#)