

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Nassau County



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Sod - The Instant Lawn

You can have a beautiful, lush, green lawn almost any time of the year in one day, but only if the soil has been properly prepared, the sod laid correctly and the turf properly maintained. If this is not done, don't waste your money on sod.

Sod is sometimes expected to cover up the mistakes of previous lawns and owners. If you are putting in a new lawn, determine what went wrong with the old one and correct the problem before going any further.

Sod is mostly comprised of Kentucky bluegrasses because the knitting ability of their rhizomes (underground stems) allows sod to be cut in pieces and lifted out of the fields 12 to 18 months after its seed was sown. Some sod growers do have quantities of tall fescue sod.

If the area to be sodded is in shade, make sure you select a sod that will do well under low-light conditions.

Soil preparation is the most important part of sodding a lawn. Remove the old grass with a rented sod-cutter, or use a non-selective herbicide; follow directions and precautions on the label. Have the soil pH tested and add the prescribed amount of lime; then add fertilizer. Apply one pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet. You can figure this out by dividing the first number on the fertilizer bag (which always represents the percent of nitrogen) into 100. The number you get is the number of pounds of fertilizer (out of the bag) you should apply per 1000 square feet. If you were to use 5-10-5, then use 20 pounds per 1000 square feet ($100/5 = 20$).

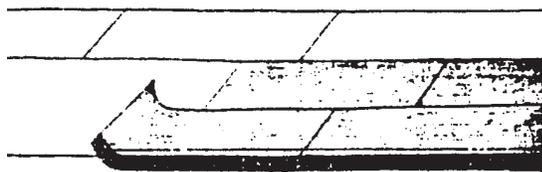
Organic matter is another important ingredient. If your soil needs it, use 4 large (6 cubic foot) bales per 1000 square feet or the equivalent of compost. Make sure you rototill the lime, fertilizer and organic matter into the top 6 to 8 inches of soil. The soil should be raked and rolled to a final and even grade.

You are now ready to put down your sod. Sod should be purchased the same day it is going to be laid. If the sod sits around, especially on a hot day, it can easily dry out and turn brown quickly. Don't buy or lay sod that isn't healthy looking (lush and green). If all the sod can't be put down in one day, store the rest in the shade - never in the sun.

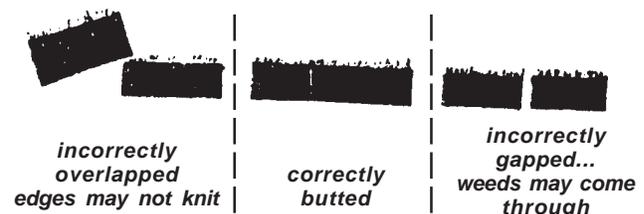
Before laying sod, the sod bed should be slightly moist, not wet. The soil layer of the sod strips should be about a half inch to enhance rooting into the underlying soil.

Make sure that the soil surrounding the sod is compatible with the soil in the sod bed or a seal between the two layers will be formed preventing drainage and root penetration resulting in a **dead** new lawn!

When laying sod, alternate or stagger the pieces of sod in a checkerboard pattern. This will keep the sod together tightly. Make sure the ends of the pieces of sod meet. Don't leave spaces and don't overlap the pieces. If you run out of sod, buy more - don't try to stretch the pieces you have. You may need to put wooden pegs in the sod to prevent it from sliding on slopes. If the slopes are very steep, grass might not be the best ground cover since it will be difficult to mow.



Start at your property line, or along the driveway or sidewalk. Roll it out like a rug; stagger the joints like rows of bricks; make sure joints are butted together without overlapping.



incorrectly overlapped edges may not knit

correctly butted

incorrectly gapped... weeds may come through

C-1-13 MTC:cms revised RT 1/09

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After the sod is properly placed, you may consider rolling it (in the direction perpendicular to which it was laid). This will ensure good sod-soil contact.

Water the sod well to a depth of 6 to 8 inches at a fairly slow rate. After this initial deep watering, water lightly at least twice each day for 15 minutes in each area. Don't allow the sod to dry out. The number one reason why sod does not take properly is the lack of proper irrigation during the establishment period.

Water until the roots from the sod have grown into the soil and the sod can't be pulled up. Then water your lawn once to twice a week with 1 to 2 inches of water. The number of times may increase during summer stress months and/or on sandy soils. Since Nassau County has strict lawn sprinkling regulations it might be best to avoid sodding during the summer months.

How well your newly sodded lawn fares is up to you. After it has been laid, your job has only just begun. For additional information about caring for bluegrass lawns, consult Home Grounds Fact Sheets C-1-1 and C-1-25.

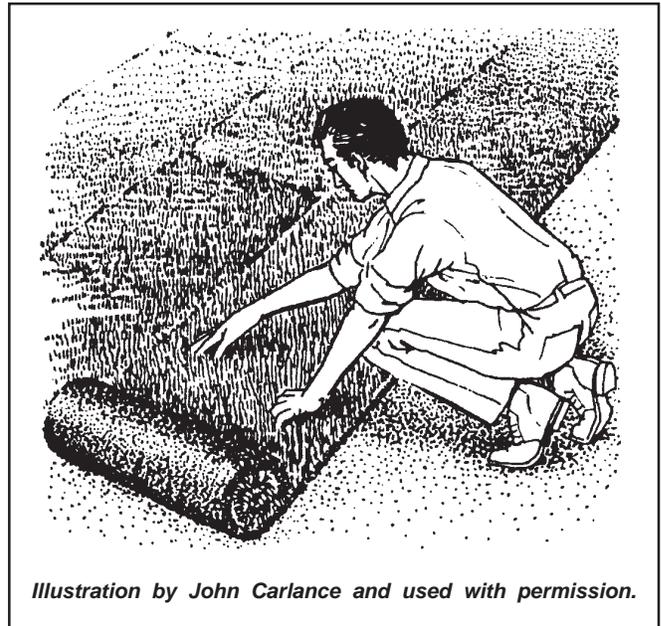


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