

WHEN TO WATER

Freshly cut sod contains enough moisture in the leaves, roots, and soil to keep the grass healthy and alive for transport and planting. However, once the sod is laid at the site it will continue to transpire water that will need to be replaced by either rainfall or supplemental irrigation.

WATERING TIP #1

It is essential to begin watering new turfgrass sod immediately upon establishment. This can be done by hand-watering with a water hose and nozzle, hose-end sprinkler, in-ground irrigation system, or any combination thereof. When watering new sod, make sure that the sod and the soil layer immediately beneath the sod is moist to a depth of ½ – 1 inch.

WATERING TIP #2

Lifting the corners of random pieces of sod and checking for moisture is a good way to ensure that the sod is wet. A screwdriver, pocket-knife, or other sharp implement is a useful tool to inspect the soil beneath the sod. If the implement easily goes into the soil, then it is likely sufficiently wet.

WATERING TIP #3

Make certain the entire lawn is receiving water. Corners, edges, and areas exposed to full sun are particularly prone to drying out. Also pay particular attention to sod laid adjacent to hardscapes as these areas can dry out sooner than others. Turfgrass leaves that are wilted and/or bluish-gray in color often appear in these areas first and are a sign of drought stress.

WATERING TIP #4

During the first few days of establishment, it is important to water newly laid sod frequently enough that the sod and top ½ – 1 inch of soil immediately beneath the sod remain wet. This may require frequent, light applications of water applied multiple times per day. This is particularly true on hot, arid, and/or windy days during the grow-in period.

WATERING TIP #5

Prevent over-watering by paying attention to runoff on sloped areas or standing water on flat areas. This is important for water conservation but also for plant health. Turfgrass roots need oxygen for respiration, and over-irrigation can slow or prevent new roots from emerging and establishing in the soil.

REPRESENTATIVE IRRIGATION PLAN FOR NEWLY LAID SOD

ESTABLISHMENT PERIOD

Light &
frequent until
rooting occurs

SHORTLY AFTER ESTABLISHMENT

Reduce amount
& frequency
as roots
develop deeper
into the soil

LONG-TERM IRRIGATION

Apply only
as needed
based on climate
& rainfall

Irrigation amounts vary by region, climate, season, etc. but a general rule of thumb based on plant evaporation rates is to apply 1 inch of water per week during the growing season. Only apply water when needed and be sure to cut off automatic irrigation systems during periods of rainfall, dormancy, or other times that supplemental irrigation is not necessary.



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TURFGRASS WATERING & CARE FOR NEW SOD

Perennial turfgrasses are some of the most hardy and **durable plants** often found in urban landscapes. Like any new planting, they require attention and **care during installation** to ensure successful establishment. This guide contains **helpful tips** to make sure your newly laid sod remains **healthy** and ready to enjoy!



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HOW TO WATER

Proper watering techniques are an essential part of caring for newly established sod. There are many different ways to water sod, each with different strengths. When used properly, in-ground systems, portable hose-end sprinklers, and hose-end nozzles can all be effective tools for watering newly laid sod.



IN-GROUND IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

In-ground irrigation systems often require professional installation but are a great way to effectively irrigate large areas. In-ground irrigation systems can also be programmed to run at specific days and times, allowing for customizable watering schedules during turfgrass establishment. Things to consider when scheduling watering programs for newly laid sod include:

- Morning and evening are good times to saturate the sod and allow it to soak into the top ½ – 1 inch of soil due to reduced losses from evaporation.
- Mid-day to early afternoon is the most likely time for newly laid sod to dry out so be sure to schedule at least one mid-day irrigation event during the first few days or weeks of establishment.
- As roots begin to penetrate the soil and the sod is difficult to lift up, then this is an indication that irrigation length and frequency can be reduced.
- Pay close attention to corners and edges to make sure that irrigation coverage is sufficient to water newly laid sod and adjust heads to eliminate overspray onto non-turfgrass areas such as driveways, streets, and sidewalks.

HOSE-END SPRINKLERS

Hose-End Sprinklers range in price, durability, and complexity but their portability makes them a great way to water newly laid sod. They can be easily moved from place to place in the lawn as the sod requires, can be scheduled on inexpensive electronic timers, and can even be used by hand to irrigate small or irregularly shaped areas that would otherwise be hard to reach. Things to consider when using Hose-End Sprinklers to water newly laid sod include:

- Output and coverage vary widely by nozzle-type so be sure to select one that will deliver a sufficient volume and pattern of water.
- Hose-End sprinklers with larger droplet sizes will reduce evaporative losses and are an important consideration, particularly for mid-day watering when evapotranspiration rates may be high.
- Hose-End sprinklers often need to be moved manually multiple times per day to adequately reach all of the newly laid sod, particularly in larger areas.
- All of the same guidelines from in-ground irrigation systems also apply to hose-end sprinklers with regard to timing, frequency, and adjustment.



POST-INSTALLATION CARE OF NEW SOD

Newly laid sod should begin to produce new roots within the first few days, which can be observed by gently pulling the corners and edges of the new sod. Prior to placing mowers or other equipment onto the newly laid sod, it is important that the irrigation has been reduced such that the sod and underlying surface is firm enough to support foot traffic, mowing, etc. without producing footprints, tire tracks, or other depressions.



MOWING

Mowing newly laid sod is an important component of encouraging lateral growth through tillers, rhizomes, or stolons. Newly laid sod should be mowed once the underlying surface is firm enough to support it and should not be prolonged to the point where significant scalping can occur. All turfgrasses, including newly laid sod, should be mowed using sharp mower blades within the recommended ranges of mowing heights frequently enough to prevent from removing more than 1/3rd of the leaf blade at any one time. Recommended mowing heights vary by turfgrass species and can be found on The Lawn Institute's website.



FERTILIZATION

Newly laid sod can be fertilized immediately prior to establishment, during establishment, or as needed after establishment. Selecting the appropriate fertilizer and application rate should be based on soil test results. More information on turfgrass fertilization can be found on The Lawn Institute's website or in the Turfgrass Fertilization pamphlet provided by Turfgrass Producers International.

IRRIGATION

As newly laid sod begins to root into the soil, irrigation applications should gradually be reduced from multiple times per day during establishment to only once every few days. Deep and infrequent watering of established turfgrasses provides a balance of oxygen and water in the soil that encourages deep, healthy roots.

For more information on how to care for newly laid sod after establishment, please check out The Lawn Institute website at www.TheLawnInstitute.org