

Early & Long Term Sod Care Guide



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THANK YOU!

Here at **Red Hen Turf Farm**,
we strive to make

Do-It-Yourself Lawn Care Do-able.

We hope you find this guide and
our website helpful, and
remember, if you EVER have
any questions or concerns,
give us a call.

We're here to help!



Early Sod Care: The First 6 Weeks

Watering - Day 1.

For the next several weeks, plan on paying extra attention to your sod's watering needs. Watering will ensure close contact between the sod roots and soil, and will prevent your new sod from drying out. Once the sod roots have firmly grown into the soil, then less water will be needed. This usually takes a few weeks, so for the first month or so, your new lawn will need a little extra help from you to become established.

In temperatures above 80° F, generally more water is needed, and if it is below 60° F, less water is needed. Typically, this means that in the cooler months of March, April, October, November, and December, newly installed sod needs much less water than in the hotter months of May - September.

During the hotter months, your sod needs to be *soaked* with water as soon as it is laid. Water each zone or section as soon as it is laid! Test it by walking on it— if you make deep footprints, your sod has enough water.

If the soil is firm, or during the cooler months, determine how much water your sod needs on Day 1 by lifting up a corner in several places and inspecting it for dampness. The soil on the back of the sod should be damp to wet. If it is not damp, water for at least 30 minutes. (TIP: Not sure? Give us a call!)

Watering - Days 2-5.

Check your lawn at least once a day, or more than once if it is hot or windy. Walk on your new lawn to inspect it. If the soil is soft and you make deep footprints, or water has puddled in areas, it is too wet and you should stop watering for awhile, and then water less often, with less water.

If the soil is firm, and also during the cool months, lift a corner of the sod in several places. The soil should be damp, not dripping wet, or dusty dry.

Also, monitor the **COLOR** of your sod. **GREEN** is good. **BLUE-GREEN** indicates not enough water, and you will have problems in 12-24 hours. **YELLOW-TAN** means the sod is heat/moisture stressed and will go dormant, but the roots and crowns are still alive so if you water more, new leaves will appear in 7-10 days. **Cracks** that appear between rolls indicate that not enough water has been applied and you should water longer or more often.

Further Watering After Day 5.

After 5 days or so, the soil has soaked up water like a sponge, and you must reduce your watering habits or you will drown the new roots. Roots will not grow into waterlogged soils! Begin stretching out the time between waterings. Reset your timer if you have an automatic system. Begin the transition to watering at the recommended levels for **Long Term Care** (see below).

Mowing. You can mow your new turf as soon as it grows enough to need it at the heights suggested under Long Term Care. Sod will grow new roots best when mowed regularly and at the proper height. Prevent your mower from sinking into soft underlying soil by not mowing right after watering or after a rainfall.

How soon can your sod be used? Here's where sod beats seeding every time — your sod is ready to be used instantly. The only concern is how soft the underlying soil is. Making deep footprints when the soil is soft won't hurt the sod, but will make for an uneven lawn. If children or pets play and turn up a corner, just pat it back down.

Weed Killers. Your new sod does not need any. See a dandelion? Just pull it out.

Fertilization. Your new sod does not need fertilizer for the first 2 weeks. Use this time to decide if you are going to fertilize the lawn yourself or hire a service.



Long Term Care: Beyond 6 Weeks

Watering the Correct Way. You can water turf any time of day, but if possible, **avoid watering in late afternoon or early evening.**

From 6 weeks to 1 year of installation, water your sod enough to keep it from going dormant. Dormancy is when the plants remain alive but stop growing and turn brown due to a lack of water. **After 1 year**, it's up to you to decide if you want to keep your sod green and growing by irrigating properly, or allow it to go dormant. Once that decision is made, stick with it because teasing turf with water is very stressful on it.

Here are two ways to determine if your sod needs water: (1) Use a **soil probe or garden trowel** to look at and feel the moisture in the soil or (2) **examine your sod during the heat of the day to see if it is wilting.** Wilting turf has narrow leaves and is bluish-green in color. If, during the heat of the day, walked-on turf remains flat, this is another sign it is wilting. **Checking the soil for moisture with a soil probe or trowel is the best way, because turf seldom wilts in spring or fall.**

If your sod needs water, it is important to apply the right amount. Turf will look better and you will have fewer problems if you irrigate properly, which means watering **thoroughly but infrequently.**

If you water with a hose and a sprinkler, set a rain gauge or tuna fish can near the sprinkler and let it run long enough to apply a ½ inch of water before moving it to the next area. Don't water again until the soil becomes **dry** and/or you see your turf begin to **wilt.**

If you have an in-ground sprinkler system, you have to experiment with each zone. Set a rain gauge or tuna fish can in a zone and run that zone long enough to apply a ½ inch of water. Record the time and program it into your controller. Do this for each zone because the time it takes to apply a ½ inch of water will be different for each zone. When you find the soil dry or notice that your turf in one zone begins to wilt, set your system to run that zone for the length of time you have determined that applies ½ inch of water.

Fixed Scheduled Watering. Many people think they are watering the right way by setting their system to operate on a fixed schedule. Fixed scheduled watering tends to over-water your lawn in the cool months and to under-water it in the hot months. **Over-watering is wasteful, causes thatch to build up, and harms the roots. Under-watered turf won't stay green.** Remember: Mother Nature is constantly changing how much rain falls, and that affects how much water your lawn needs. She does not operate on a fixed schedule!

Mowing. From May - September, mow your lawn at 2 ½ to 3 inches high. From September - November, gradually lower the blade to a final height of 2 inches. Mowing higher results in fewer weed problems and a healthier turf.

Grass Clippings. Clippings do not contribute to thatch production, and should not be collected unless they are so long or clumpy that they would smother the grass. Leaving the clippings recycles important nutrients back onto your lawn, saving in fertilizer costs.

Fertilization. It is important to fertilize properly, whether you hire out the work or do it yourself. That said, to keep your sod looking as green and thick as it is when you purchase it, you will need to fertilize 4 to 5 times annually. Visit our website, or give us a call to find out how we can help make personalized recommendations based on factors such as your goals, how much time and money you are willing to spend, and even your latest Soil Test.

Soil Test. To soil test or not, that is the question! Consider doing a scientific analysis of your soil, especially if you are particular about your lawn or have grass problems. When using our Soil Testing Procedures, we translate your results into layman's terms and make recommendations for fertilizing your lawn based on your soil's nutritional needs.

Weed Control. The first line of weed defense is to have a thick lawn that is mowed high. If you hire a lawn service, they will take care of your weeds. If you plan to do it yourself, give us a call or check out our website.

Crabgrass and Grub Control. Unfortunately, industry advertising has made the threats from these pests seem more menacing than they really are. Consumers end up wasting money on these products by unnecessarily adding pesticides that may harm the environment. A lawn seldom needs to be totally treated. Spot-treating problem areas is our preferred approach. **Crabgrass** is only a problem in spots where the turf is thin. It is most effective to spot-treat crabgrass in the spring - before the seeds have the chance to grow. Treat the thin spots that have had crabgrass in the past. **As for grubs**, all lawns have some grubs. **Did you know that it takes five or more grubs per square foot to potentially cause damage?** By becoming informed, you will save money and protect the environment.

Aerification. Aerification loosens up compacted soil. New lawns can be compacted during construction and may benefit if aerified the first two years. Vehicle traffic, intense wear from dogs or heavy objects like swing sets can also compact soils. Studies show that **core aerification** is the method that provides the most benefits. You will need to make at least 3-4 passes. Core aerification is not a substitute for dethatching.

Dethatching. Thatch is the layer of cocoa brown material below the leaves and above the soil. A ½ inch of thatch is ideal, while more than ¾ inch is excessive and will cause severe lawn problems. Clippings do not add to thatch. **Over-watering, over-fertilizing, and/or soil compaction** are the most common causes of excessive thatch levels. Visit the Purdue link below for more information.

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Purdue's Turfgrass Science Website: www.agry.purdue.edu/turf



Guarantee

Red Hen Sod is guaranteed to be in good growing condition at the time of sale; after that, it is your responsibility. If the sod is not watered properly, it will not grow. **Call us immediately** at the time of sale if the sod is anything but healthy. We will give the matter our prompt attention. **You must call within the first 24 hours if there are any issues with the sod.**

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