



# Early and long term sod care instructions

## Early Sod Care

### *The first 6 weeks*

Thank you for investing in Red Hen Sod. We know you will enjoy its' beauty for years to come.

**First day watering.** The sod should be **soaked** with water as soon as it is laid. Water each zone or section as soon as it is laid! Check by walking on it. If you make deep footprints, it has enough water. If the soil is firm, lift a corner of the sod to inspect. The soil on the back of the sod should be damp to wet. If it is not damp, water for at least 30 minutes.

**Second through fifth day watering.** Check your lawn at least one time per day, or more than once if it is hot or windy. Walk on the new lawn to inspect it. If the soil is soft and you make deep footprints, or water has puddle in areas, it is too wet and you should stop watering for awhile, and water less often with less water. If the soil is firm, lift a corner of the sod in several places. The soil should be damp, not dripping wet, or dusty dry. Watch the color of the 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. The roots and crowns are still alive and if you water more, new leaves will appear in seven to ten days. Cracks that appear between the rolls indicates not enough water has been applied and you should water longer or more often. Temperatures above 80o F generally mean more water is needed and below 60o F means less water is needed. In the cooler months of March, April, October, and November, sod needs much less water.

**Further watering.** After five 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 the watering. Reset your timer if you have an automatic system. Begin the transition to water like we say under Long Term Care.

**Mowing.** *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 it is mowed regularly and at the proper height. Arrange it so you do not water just before mowing so the mower won't sink into the soft soil.

**How soon can the sod be used?** The 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 play and turn a corner up, just pat it back down.

**Weed killers.** Your sod does not need any. Should a dandelion be present, just pull it out.

**Fertilization.** The lawn does not need fertilizer for two weeks. Use this time to decide if you are going to fertilize the lawn yourself or hire a service. If you are going to do it yourself, please check out our products or give us a call.



## Long Term Care

### *Beyond 6 weeks*

**Watering the correct way.** From 6 weeks to one year of installation, sod should be watered 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, owners can decide if they want to keep their 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 to the turf.

There are two ways to determine if turf needs water. One way is to use a soil probe or garden trowel to look at and feel the moisture in the soil. The other way is to look at turf during the heat of the day to see if it is wilting. Wilting turf has narrow leaves and is bluish-green in color. Walked on turf remains flat, and symptoms appear during the heat of the day. Checking the soil for moisture is the best way, because turf seldom wilts in spring or fall.

Once you have determined the turf needs water, it is important to apply the right amount. Turf will look better and you will have fewer problems if you water it properly, which is thoroughly but infrequently. If you water with a hose and a sprinkler, set a rain gage or tuna fish can near the sprinkler and let it run long enough to apply 1/2 inch of water before moving it to the next area. Don't water again until the soil becomes dry and or you see the turf begin to wilt.

If you have an in ground sprinkler system, you have to experiment with each zone. Set a rain gage or tuna fish can in a zone and run that zone long enough to apply 1/2 of water. Record the time and program it into your controller. Do this for each zone because the time it takes to apply 1/2 of water will be different for each zone. When you find the soil dry or notice that the turf in one zone begins to wilt, set your system to run that zone for the length of time you have determined that applies 1/2 inch of water. You can water turf any time, but if you can, avoid watering in late afternoon or early evening.

Unfortunately, many people think they are watering the right way by setting their system to operate a few minutes on fixed schedule. Fixed scheduled watering over waters the turf in the cool months and under waters the turf in the hot months. Over watering is wasteful, causes thatch to build up, and harms the roots; and under watered turf won't stay green. Mother Nature is constantly changing how much rain falls, and how much water turf plants need, and she does not operate on a fixed schedule!

**Mowing.** From May through September, mow at 2 ½ to 3 inches high. From September through November, gradually lower the height to a final height of 2 inches. Mowing high like this results in fewer weed problems and a healthier turf.

**Clippings.** Clippings do not contribute to thatch production. Clipping should not be collected unless they are long and smother the grass. Leaving the clippings recycles the nutrients back onto the lawn, saving in fertilizer costs.

**Fertilization.** It is important to fertilize by a program, whether you hire the work done or do it yourself. Contact a lawn service or visit a garden center to get set up. Visit the library section of our website, or call our office to learn how to Evaluate a Fertilizer Program, on how to design your own, or choose one of ours.



**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 products online.

**Crabgrass and grub controls.** Unfortunately, advertising has made the threats from these pests seem larger than they really are. Large sums of money are wasted and pesticides are unnecessarily added to the environment. Briefly, crabgrass is only a problem in spots where the turf is thin. You can approach control two ways. Spottreat thin spots that have had crabgrass in the past in the spring before it comes up, or have a lawn service spottreat the weeds after they come up. A lawn seldom needs to be totally treated. All lawns have some grubs, but it takes more than five per square foot to cause damage. To save yourself some money, and protect the environment, become informed. The library of our website is a good place to start learning and find good links.

**Aerification.** The purpose of aerification is to loosen up a compacted soil. Compaction comes from two sources. New lawns can be compacted during construction and may benefit if aerified the first two years. Vehicle traffic, intense wear from dogs or under a swing set can also compact soils. Studies show that core aerification is the method that provides the most benefits and one or two passes does not accomplish much. Core aerification is not a substitute for dethatching. Visit the Purdue link for more information.

**Dethatching.** Thatch is the layer of cocoa brown material below the leaves and above the soil. 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. Overwatering is the most common cause of excessive thatch levels. Visit the Purdue link for more information.

**Favorite links.** [www.agry.purdue.edu/turf](http://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, and we will give the matter our prompt attention. Don't call us 2 or 3 days later and tell us our sod looked bad when you bought it.