

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!
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PREPARING TO INSTALL SOD

Prepare for Success BEFORE You Lay Sod.

Sod laying is not rocket science, but unless you do it fairly often, you may miss some important steps that really affect your outcome. If you review this guide **before** you start laying sod - whether you're covering a large area or doing some patching - you will find the process easier and will end up with a nicer, healthier lawn.

Shade and Air Movement.

Kentucky Bluegrass sod and our Tall Fescue sod are ideal for full sun and light amounts of shade. As a rule, **both types of sod will do best with at least 4 hours of direct sunlight each day.** Air movement also has a big effect. Trees that have high branches that let the air move are better sites for bluegrass, than a maple tree surrounded by a solid board privacy fence. ASK for more information about grass in the shade or about our Kentucky Bluegrass vs. Tall Fescue sod.

Recommended Tools.

- ⇒ Shovels and Rakes to prepare the soil
- ⇒ You might consider renting a Rototiller and/or Sod-Cutter
- ⇒ A Wheelbarrow will make the job easier
- ⇒ Cutting Tools - Sod can be cut with a variety of tools, even an old steak knife.
- ⇒ Plenty of Hoses and Sprinklers if you don't have a sprinkler system.

The Scoop on Topsoil.

Adding topsoil is not essential for a new sodding, but it provides some benefits. Topsoil increases the soil's water and nutrient holding capacity, so intervals between watering and fertilizing can be extended. If you do add topsoil, 2 inches will provide good benefits **BUT you MUST mix it into the existing soil.** **If you cannot mix the new topsoil into the existing soil, then we recommend against new topsoil being added.** An unmixed layer of topsoil may *prevent* grass from rooting deeply.

Measuring.

Our sod is sold by the square foot, so calculating how much you need is as simple or hard as measuring your site. Be sure to order enough to account for trimming because we cannot deliver you another 500 sq feet for the same price we just delivered you 5,000 sq feet. However, if you do under-measure, you can pick sod up at our farm for the same square foot price as we just delivered, within 3 days of last purchase. Need help measuring? Give us a call.

Removing Existing Lawn.

If your lawn is really small or you're patching a small area, shovels may do the trick. You could rent a **Sod-Cutter** to shave off the top grass evenly. Another approach is to **CORRECTLY** use certain herbicides to kill off the old lawn. If you want to learn more about this option, give us a call. NOTE: Always read and follow the manufacturers label instructions when using any herbicide, pesticide or fertilizer.

Loosening The Soil & Leveling It Out ... A Landscaper Is Your Friend!

Basically, the goal is to loosen the soil at a depth of 2-3 inches, and level it out. Most builders provide homeowners with a rough grade that is done with a bulldozer that leaves the soil fairly level but usually compacted. Having a landscaper **tractor rake** a lawn to remove compaction and **level the soil** is money very well spent. Many landscapers work with builders and are happy to perform this service even if you will lay the sod yourself. A **rototiller** also does a good job of loosening the soil but you still need to **level** it. If you are adding topsoil, while it may cost a bit more, it is worth it to have the landscaper

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**Red Hen Carries
Sod
Seed
Fertilizer &
Erosion Products**

SHOP HOURS: Monday thru Friday 8A-4P (EST)

***** ASK ABOUT AFTER-HOURS PICKUPS & WEEKEND SOD DELIVERIES *****

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loosen the soil first, then apply the topsoil, and then have the landscaper return to mix the 2 soils together. Once you have done a final raking of the soil, if it rains, you do not have to re-rake it again, except to repair a washout.

Starter Fertilizer.

It is important to provide the grass plants with the nutrition they need to grow new roots, and a starter fertilizer is a great way to do just that. You can pick up starter fertilizer from us, or we can deliver it along with your sod order. You would apply our starter fertilizer at a rate of 8 pounds per 1,000 square feet on the soil **before you put the sod down** (50 lb bag = 6,250sqft coverage). Skipping this step for smaller areas is not a huge deal, but once you get around 2000 sqft, it's highly recommended.

The Value Of Friendship.

As a DIY Project — compared to hiring a professional to lay the sod — you'll save at least \$1.50-\$3 per Roll (and that's not even including the cost for professional site preparation). The average person can lay about 400-500 sqft of sod per hour. Each roll weigh about 35 (or more) pounds each, so if you're lucky to have friends willing to pitch in, there is no such thing as too much help. 😊

How Long Can The Sod Stay Rolled Up?

Sod is a living plant, so the quicker you can transplant it, the better. With cooler temperatures in the spring, sod can last 3 or 4 days rolled up. In the summer, sod really needs to be unrolled and installed the same day you get it. Weather can be unpredictable, so once you confirm your order and the sod is harvested, it is yours. Rain delays after receiving your sod can stress out you **and** your sod. No matter the season, if you get rained out or have to quit for a while, **do not cover the sod** ... let it breathe or you run the risk of heat building up and "cooking" your sod.

Considerations When Patching Sod.

There are two ways to patch an area: (1) you can trim the sod to fit the spot, or (2) you can enlarge the spot to fit our 2ft by 5 ft rolls of sod, which also achieves straight lines. The second way looks better, and makes it easier to prepare the soil.

INSTALLING & PATCHING SOD

1. After your soil is loosened 2-3 inches and leveled out, the next step is to pick up sticks and rocks bigger than 2 inches. Press the smaller rocks into the soil. You do not need to remove bits of old grass or weeds that are smaller than a tennis ball. If you have a lot of dirt clods, spread them out evenly because they will melt when you water.
2. Right next to **DRIVEWAYS & SIDEWALKS**, make the soil 1.5 inches lower so water will drain onto the lawn. Next to **EXISTING GRASS**, make the soil ½ inch lower so the sod will match be level. **SPRINKLER HEADS** should stick up about ½ inch.
3. Apply **STARTER FERTILIZER** at a rate of 8 pounds per 1000 square feet, and lightly rake it into the soil.
4. Try to start unrolling and laying sod in an section that minimizes the amount you might have to carry. For example, if are sodding your entire lawn, start in the back and work to the front. If you are sodding part of your lawn, start in the front and work to the back until you run out of sod.
5. Unroll the first row of sod to make a straight line. **Do not overlap rolls or leave gaps.** For the next row, stagger the sod in a **brick-like pattern** so the rows of sod don't line up in a long running seam. **On steep hills**, lay the sod perpendicular to the slope so that it has a greater surface area holding it in place if there is rainfall, and consider using sod pins. **Outside edges of sod** that do not butt up to anything should have a little soil raked up to the exposed edge to prevent the edges from drying out. **Rolling sod** after laying it may compact the soil and make new root growth difficult. If you do roll, do so **LIGHTLY**.

WATERING ON DAY 1

Sod should be soaked with water as soon as it is laid. Begin watering as soon as you can, while also avoiding a muddy mess in the areas yet to be sodded. Ideally, you will 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 or wet, and if it is NOT damp or wet, water for at least 30 more minutes.

More Helpful Tips for Installing and Patching.

- If the temperature is above 85° and the soil is dry, wet the soil about 24 hours ahead of time, enough so that when you lay the sod, the soil is still slightly damp. Dampened soil is cooler and the turf will root faster.
- **Have more questions?** Be sure to read our "Early and Long Term Sod Care Instructions" available at redhenturf.com/resource-hub or call us and we'll get it to you by email. Also, NEVER hesitate to give us a call— even years from now!

Seeding to Supplement Sod.

Ask for our TIPS FOR GRASS SEEDING Guide to help your project be a successful as possible. Or find it at redhenturf.com/resource-hub. Or give us a call and have a chat.