

Big Roll Sod Installations

One of the biggest impacts to the sod industry in the last 25 years has to be the acceptance of big roll. Big roll harvesting has been around since the 1960's, but it was the expansion of labor cost since 1990 that pushed the development of this process. ***Big roll was once thought as only applying to athletic fields. It does, but it has spread to all installations.***

What is Red Hen's Big Roll Sod? Big roll sod harvesters in general come in 24", 30", twin 21", 42", and 48" sizes. Red Hen chose 30" (resulting in 2.5 feet wide rolls) because it has fewer seams than the twin 21" rolls. Red Hen's Big Roll Sod measures 2.5 ft 80 ft (200 SF). Little Roll Sod, in comparison, is 2 ft by 5 ft (10 SF). We can harvest our Kentucky Bluegrass Sod and Tall Fescue Sod as both Big Rolls or Little Rolls. The cost of our sod is the same for Big and Little Rolls, but, there is a rental fee for Big Roll Sod Layers. **Big Rolls are wrapped around "Tubes" that must be returned to Red Hen to avoid fees.**

Big Roll is TYPICALLY EASIER & MORE COST EFFECTIVE. Ease of installation is where big roll really has advantages. With Little Roll, landscapers familiar with big roll tell us they typically lay about 500 SF per "man-hour." With Big Roll, once used to the process, they can lay closer to 1000 SF or more per man hour. Big roll sod laying is done by machine, which reduces the amount of brute labor required. In fact, many big roll crews are made up of women and older people because it is substantially easier. Big roll lays twice as fast with half the labor!



Big Roll Machines. For Red Hen Equipment Rentals, by far most popular is the Brouwer Motorized Big Roll Sod Layer. Rarely, we rent out a 3-Point Hitch Layer. There is a variety of machines available to lay big roll sod, and the one you choose depends on the equipment you already have and personal preference. The most popular big roll sod layer / installer on the market is the Brouwer, which is motorized. The Brouwer is a durable, reasonably priced machine, and several of our Customers have even purchased their own (ask us about this!).



To the left / top, you see a Photo where the Brouwer Operator unrolls the sod close to where it belongs and a helper uses a rake to butt it up. Notice the strip behind the person installing. The strip was carefully laid along the edge as a stop line and will be trimmed later in the installation process. As you can see in the next photo, following the Brouwer Operator is a person to butt the edges. The better job the Operator does, the less butting is needed.



The simplest type of big roll sod layer is the 3-point hitch, which is shown in the 3rd Photo to the Left. This type of layer attaches to the three-point hitch of a tractor. It will NOT hook to a skid loader. It is a very inexpensive installer but requires more operator skill. Also, the tractor tire will make impressions on some soil types. *(Continued on back side,)*

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

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

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Laying Big Roll Sod For the First Time. Laying big roll sod must be approached as a new skill to learn. Like every new skill, you must commit time and effort to learn. Red Hen rents Brouwer sod installers, and 3-Point Hitches, which requires signing a Rental Agreement and providing a Certificate of Insurance (COI). *If requested, Red Hen can provide some onsite-training to help your crew out the first time you rent our Big Roll installation equipment.* You'll want to designate a crew leader and two other people. A crew of three is a good place to start. One drives the machine, one butts up the seams, and one helps with sod trimming and picking up rolls. It is best to select a fairly level site that has few trees as your first job.

Tips for Your Crew. Other than green side up, there are not a lot of wrong ways to lay big roll, but here are some tips.

- You now lay as a crew, not individuals. When one person takes a break, everybody does.
- Everybody has a specific task. The person butting the sod usually cuts the sod to length, so they need to be at the end when the operator is there to trim it.
- Where you start laying is important. Most people like to make long runs.
- Keep records! Try different methods, but keep track of man-hour productivity.
- Remember that not every day or job is perfect. Learn to adapt laying to different sites and conditions. Accept the fact some jobs will lay faster than others.

Tips for the Owners.

- Remember that your crew is learning something new.
- Productivity increases over time. Typically, crews will hit a plateau after 6 months, and then increase more.
- Demand your crews keep records. Consider incentives if certain rates are achieved.
- Red Hen will support you. We rent big roll sod layers to landscapers, which is a good way to see if you like that style enough to buy your own equipment. We also carry a supply of parts for the Brouwers and may be able to assist with repair work if you purchase a Brouwer. Curious about this? Give us a call.

Advantages of Big Roll Sodding.

- 1) Your company will make more money, especially over time, and with good record-keeping to track progress.
 - Labor costs are reduced.
 - Workers have less fatigue.
 - Jobs are completed faster.
 - There are a fixed number of hours you can work in a season, so if you can do jobs FASTER, you can do MORE jobs.
- 2) Sod laying becomes more profitable. You can send a crew of 3 to a job, and generate \$1000 or more of income per day.
- 3) You'll receive fewer call backs. We can provide your team with Red Hen's Early & Long-Term Sod Care Guide in the form of a PDF document that includes detailed sod care instructions to provide to the homeowner. By emailing your customers our Sod Care Guide, this also provides you with PROOF that you have offered them proper care instructions. You can also let your customers know that it's fine if they call Red Hen directly with questions or concerns, even years from now. If you wish for us to provide hard copies of Red Hen's Early & Long-Term Sod Care Guide, let us know how many copies to send with our delivery driver.
- 4) You'll have more satisfied customers. A seeding job does not complete a job like sod does. People have unreasonable expectations with seed and hydroseed and they often look for someone to blame. You can't prevent heavy rains washing out seed, but you can be blamed for them. Big roll sod looks great, especially with fewer seams than little roll sod.
- 5) Sod is good for your reputation. Many landscapers leave a sign promoting their work, and a sign in a weedy washed out lawn will probably not convey the message you want.

All of our big roll sod is wrapped around custom-made tubes that mount to the Sod Layers, and all tubes must be saved and returned to Red Hen. Rented Equipment must be returned to Red Hen within 24-hours after the final load of sod is delivered for the project. Red Hen's minimum fee to come to your job site and pick up equipment is \$300.00. Additional Fees may apply if Equipment or Tubes are not returned within the terms of Red Hen's Rental Agreement.

While we reserve the right to adjust pricing as needed without prior notification to our Customers, Red Hen's 2025 Rental Fees include:

- Brouwer Motorized Sod Layer—\$0.05 / SF or \$500.00 per day
- 3-Point Hitch—\$50.00 / Day
- Sod Cost is the same per square foot, whether it's big roll or little roll!
- Rental Equipment Pickup Fee—if Customer elects not to return equipment to Red Hen's Shop- \$300.00 Minimum