

Guide to New Sod Care & Maintenance

Sod is easy to install and provides an instant lawn, but it requires a little more care than you would give an established lawn. New sod has shallow roots, which need time to establish in the soil. Proper watering, fertilizing and maintenance are vital to ensuring your new sod will endure long after it is installed.

Water

New sod requires more water than an established lawn because its roots need consistent moisture. For the first seven to 10 days, new sod requires five to 10 minutes of watering, two to three times daily. Provide enough water to soak the first few inches of soil. For the next seven to 10 days, reduce watering to once per day, making sure to soak the top 1/4 inch of soil. After three weeks, you can reduce watering to every other day, soaking to a soil depth of about 1/2 inch. When your sod has been growing for about four weeks, the roots should be established enough to reduce watering to once or twice per week. If temperatures climb above 85 degrees Fahrenheit at any point during the first four weeks, increase watering to two or three times per day to prevent drying. Water your new sod in the morning or the evening, when temperatures are cooler. Watering during the hottest parts of the day can burn your new grass.

Fertilization

Most sod is fertilized prior to harvesting, so it usually does not need to be fertilized for at least 30 to 60 days after installation. Fertilizing before this time causes yellow patches in your lawn because the shallow root system of the sod can't absorb the nutrients, causing nitrogen to leach into the soil. After a minimum of 30 days, you may apply a granular fertilizer with a nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium ratio of 16-16-16 at a rate of 6 1/2 pounds per 1,000 square feet of lawn, or 10-20-20 at a rate of 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet of lawn. Make sure you apply the fertilizer when the ground is dry, and spread it evenly over the lawn. Water the lawn thoroughly after application.

Mowing

New sod should not be mowed immediately. Typically you should mow your new lawn about two to three weeks after installation. Once the grass is about 3 inches tall, you can take off one inch. Avoid cutting it too short. Make sure your mower blade is sharp, and never cut more than one-third of the blade length.

Use

Avoid walking on your new sod for at least 10 days, and keep foot traffic to a minimum for three to four weeks after installation, particularly if conditions are overly dry or wet. New sod needs to establish its roots, and disturbance can affect the success of this process. If you must walk on the sod, try to use a different route each time so that you are not treading on the same area. To prevent others from walking on your new lawn, mark a perimeter with stakes and string or tape.