

SEEDING OR SODDING A NEW LAWN

The best time for establishing a new lawn is between mid-August and mid-September. The first thing the homeowner must decide is whether to use seed or sod. Using seed is less expensive than sod, and there are more turf varieties to choose from, particularly the shade tolerant grass types, which are not generally available as sod. Sod, on the other hand, provides an instant lawn and can minimize weed problems.

Whether seeding or sodding, soil preparation is the key to success. First, use a non-selective herbicide to get rid of any weeds, remove debris such as rocks, sticks and gravel, and rototill or cultivate the soil to a depth of 3-6 inches. Next, mix in 3-4 inches of topsoil or organic matter. At this point, a soil test is recommended to determine what type of fertilizer should be applied. If no test is done, apply a balanced fertilizer such as a 12-12-12 at a rate of 25 pounds per 1000 square feet.

If you are sodding, you should have all this done before the sod is delivered, to minimize the time the sod is stored. Once installed, frequent shallow watering is recommended for the first week or so, gradually changing to deeper infrequent watering as the lawn becomes established.

If you decide to seed, choose a mixture of grass types that is suited to the light conditions of the area. Apply half of the seed in one direction, and the other half at a right angle using a drop or rotary spreader. Rake lightly to improve seed to soil contact, and cover with straw. One bale should be enough for 500 square feet. At this point it is important to keep the soil evenly moist with frequent shallow watering until the seed has germinated and the lawn is well established. And, as with the sodded lawn, gradually change over to infrequent deep watering to maintain the lawn.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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