



The BCLS Landscape Services Guide to Seeding and Sodding Lawns

BEST TIMES TO SEED/SOD:

The best time of the year to seed a new lawn is roughly between the last week of August and early-October, when warm daytime temperatures and cool, dewy nights produce the best germination. Seeding can be done at other times (except winter), but hot or cold temperatures and dry weather reduce germination and may require a second "touch up" seeding later. Sodding can be done with good results at any time between April and early December, when the ground is workable and not frozen.

SOIL PREPARATION AND FERTILIZING:

1. If the area to be seeded/sodded is covered with grass, weeds, or groundcover, you can remove them by: (i) grubbing them out using a grape hoe; (ii) using a sod cutter (available at Decker Tool Rental or Handy Rent-All) to remove the grass; or (iii) apply Roundup, a systemic, contact herbicide which kills the entire weed plant, and does not leave active residues in the soil. (Note: For best results, Roundup should be applied at least 7-10 days prior to seeding or sodding, and only during periods when weeds or grass are actively growing, to allow for absorption through the foliage.)
2. After the grass/groundcover has been removed, rototill the topsoil thoroughly to depth of 4-6". Remove any stones, roots or debris.
3. Use a steel rake to rake the lawn surface smooth, eliminate low pockets that will produce puddles, and remove small stones.
4. Spread evenly by hand or with a cyclone-type spreader approximately:

50 lbs. Agricultural Limestone for every 800-1000 sq. ft. of lawn
15 lbs. Lawn and Plant Food (10-6-4) for every 1,000 sq. ft. of lawn
25 lbs. Superphosphate (0-20-0) for every 1,000 sq. ft. of lawn area

Scratch in lightly with lawn rake.
5. Now the soil is ready for seeding or sodding.

A. SEEDING:

- i.** For sunny lawn areas (at least 5 hours direct sun), use Rosedale Premium Sunny Lawn Seed (which has a mix of Improved Bluegrasses, Fescues, and Perennial Rye). For shaded areas (less than 5 hours direct sun), use Rosedale Shady Lawn Seed (which has a higher proportion of shade-tolerant fine Fescues).
- ii.** Spread the seed evenly by hand or with a Cyclone-type spreader, following coverage rates in container instructions.
- iii.** Roll with lawn roller if desired.
- iv.** Mulch lightly with Salt Hay, which does not contain weed seeds. The Salt Hay should be spread to give a light, fluffy covering. Avoid leaving heavy, matted clumps of Salt Hay, which will reduce seed germination. The mulch will help retain soil moisture, reduce splashing and minor erosion, and keep birds away from seed. One bale of Salt Hay should cover between approx. 600-700 sq. ft.
- v.** Protect newly-seeded areas with stakes and string or ribbon to keep off traffic. Keep children and pets out of newly seeded areas as much as possible until the ground is firm and the grass has become established.
- vi.** Water newly seeded lawns lightly and evenly every 1-2 days until the grass has reached 3-4" in height and is ready for its first mowing. Then gradually reduce watering as the grass becomes established.
- vii.** After a couple of weeks, if grass does not appear to be growing thickly in a few spots, rake back mulch, reseed as required, and re-cover with mulch.

B. SODDING:

- i.** Sod should be watered daily and used as soon as possible: If sod cannot be used immediately, wet down bare soil, driveway or wooded area and lay sod out. Do not leave sod stacked, because the interior of the pile will "heat up" and the sod will develop brown or dead areas. Water sod every day until used.
- ii.** Lay sod by starting with a clear, straight lawn edge and laying sod strips perpendicular to straight edge and parallel with each other. Use whole strips where possible. Where curves or changes in direction are required, use a sharp knife to cut sod to fit. For best results, use at least 1/2 strip sizes. Discard small pieces, which generally dry out very quickly and do not provide a uniform, even appearance.
- iii.** Fit the edges of the strips closely together and press sod pieces firmly and completely into contact with soil. Fill any joints with clean, loose topsoil, and tamp lightly with fingers. When finished with laying the sod, water evenly and thoroughly to help put the sod in contact with the soil.
- iv.** Put up a protective "fence" and keep off foot traffic until sod is established. Sod should root into soil and become established in 4-6 weeks.
- v.** Watering - New sod should be watered daily with a hose sprinkler for 3-4 weeks, until grass is well rooted. Avoid creating standing puddles. A good soaking rain will suffice for a day or two. After the sod begins to root in or "take", cut back watering to 2-3 times per week.

MOWING:

Newly seeded and sodded lawns should be mowed when the grass reaches about 3" in height. For the first few times, set the mower on a high (2-1/2") setting for the first 3-4 mowings, to avoid lifting sod with mower. Afterwards, mow regularly to keep the grass healthy and growing well. Use at least a 2" setting to avoid "scalping" the grass, and to reduce water use.

ANNUAL CARE:

Regular, frequent mowing (about every 7 days during warm months; 8-14 days during cooler spring and fall months) is important to produce a thick, healthy lawn. Mower blades should be kept sharp. For a healthier grass foliage and roots, do not cut grass below 2" ht. Water lawns during hot or dry periods. Fertilize lawns with Lawn and Plant Food (10-6-4) in spring and fall, and apply Agricultural Limestone each fall to reduce acidity and maintain soil pH at about 6.5-7.0.

For all lawns --

Helpful Materials:

Agricultural Limestone
Lawn and Plant Food (10-6-4)
Superphosphate Fertilizer (0-20-0)

Helpful Equipment:

Steel Rake
Lawn Rake
Cyclone or similar spreader
Grape Hoe (for grubbing)
Wheelbarrow

For Seeding lawns --

Helpful Materials:

Premium Sunny Lawn
Seed Mixture, or
Shady Lawn Seed Mixture
Salt Hay Mulch

Helpful Equipment:

Rototiller (available at
equipment rental firms)
Lawn Roller
Wood Stakes
String

For Sodding lawns --

Helpful Materials:

Blend Lawn Sod

Helpful Equipment:

Garden Hose and Lawn Sprinkler

SUGGESTED REFERENCES:

ALL ABOUT LAWNS (Ortho Books)

BUILDING A HEALTHY LAWN (Garden Way)

CONTROLLING LAWN AND GARDEN INSECTS (Ortho Books)