

## Planting Your Lawns

Tips on how to start planting you lawns

You can start a new lawn from seed, sod, sprigs or plugs. Sod is the best for lawn if you are in a hurry, seed is cheaper, less labor intensive and offers the greatest choice of turfgrass varieties. Sprigs and plugs small tufts of established grasses are the only choice for some turfgrasses. No matter how you plant, lawns won't grow unless the soil beneath them is reasonably healthy

### Soil preparation

Improving the soil for lawn growth is as important as it is for any other planting. Take time to test the soil, and be sure to specify that the test is for lawn. Amend the soil as needed, if your soil doesn't need amending broadcast a starter fertilizer over the area at the rate recommended on the fertilizer label.

If your soil is more than 60% clay or 70 % sand work in atleast a 2inch layer of organic matter or a 3inch layer of topsoil that is high in organic matter. Till to a depth of 6inches or for larger lawns make one or two passes with a tractor mounted disk. Then broadcast starter fertilizer and rake the surface smooth. The soil will be soft after this procedure, rent a roller and fill it one-third to one-half of water and roll the soil. Don't wait long to plant after rolling.

If you are working in an area where an old undesirable lawn must be removed, rent a sod stripper a machine about the size of a lawn mower to take off the existing vegetation "consider someone to complete this step". Expect to lose some of your topsoil along with the sod. Then prepare the soil as outlined.

### Starting from seed

Calculate the amount of seed you will need to cover the space you've prepared. Use either a drop or broadcast spreader to sow the seed. Divide the recommended amount of seed into two equal portions. Sow the first portion across the lawn in rows, then sow the second portion in rows at right angles to first until you have crisscrossed the whole lawn.

After seeding, ensure good contact between seed and soil by lightly raking the entire area. Then go over it with water filled roller. Don't rake too roughly. Doing so could redistribute the seed, ruin the final grade, and bury the seed too deeply.

Mulch, after seeding to keep the soil moist and hasten germination. Use finely shredded compost or dried manure, topsoil, straw, or even a thin layer of sawdust. Apply the mulch no more than half-inch thick and as evenly as possible. You must thoroughly soak the soil to a 6-inch depth after sowing, then lightly water with sprinkler as often as three to four times daily until the grass is established. Use a fine spray or nozzle with a mist setting to avoid washing away soil and seed.

### Sod, sprigs, and plugs

Lay sod as soon as its delivered so the roots won't dry out. Begin laying sod against a straight edge, such as a sidewalk or driveway. If you have irregularly shaped lawn, create a straight line by drawing one on the soil with spray paint or by stringing a line across it. Carefully unroll a piece of sod and set it next to your line. Set each sod tightly against the previous one, staggering the end joints at each row. Roll a water filled roller across it to ensure good contact between sod and soil. Water thoroughly after putting the sod. Then water daily, soaking the soil beneath for at least two weeks.

The fastest planting method for sprigs is broadcast sprigging. Strew them over the soil by hand, then cover them with a light layer of soil and roll lightly with a water filled roller. For plugs use a steel plugger to dig holes of the proper size in the soil, spacing them 6 to 12 inches apart, depending on the type of grass. To help the lawn take hold evenly, offset the rows of plugs in checker board pattern. Lightly moisten the soil and place the plugs in the holes. After planting, roll them as with sod and sprigs. Water sprigs and plugs daily for the first two weeks after planting. It is vitally important to keep the soil between them free of weeds until they have filled in the lawn.

### About the Author

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