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CONTACT: Rusty Stachlewitz, Program Director

Jim Novak, Public Relations Manager

2 East Main Street, East Dundee, IL 60118

Tel: 800/405-TURF

info@thelawninstitute.org

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR SODDED LAWN

The following steps will help you maintain a thick lawn after natural turfgrass sod is installed. These recommendations from The Lawn Institute (www.thelawninstitute.org) are for Cool-Season turfgrasses such as Tall Fescue and Kentucky Bluegrass.

At Installation

- Starter fertilizer should be incorporated into the soil before the sod is laid.
- Sod should be installed onto damp soil.
- Sod should be watered as soon as it is installed because some of the plants roots have been removed and it is important to give the plants special care.

After Installation

- Traffic should be kept off the sod until it has completely rooted, this can be checked by pulling on the end of a piece of sod.
- Water should be applied to insure that the soil surface under the sod is damp, this encourages the sod to root into the soil. Notice the word is damp! If the soil is saturated all of the air gets pushed from it and the plant cannot survive. Use a screw driver to check the soil moisture. If it slides in and out easily the soil is the correct dampness. If it comes out muddy it is too wet. If you can't get it to penetrate it is too dry.
- The sod can be mowed when it is rooted. Be sure not to remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade. Most grasses should be cut at a height of 2.5-3.5 inches. The longer the better. Think of the grass blades as solar panels for the plant. The longer the blades the more energy the plant can store. Energy is stored in the roots as carbohydrates. Longer grass on the top = Deeper roots. Deeper roots allow the grass to find more water and nutrients and be healthier in general.

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During the First Year

- After the sod has rooted, begin to lengthen the intervals between watering. Water deeply and infrequently as needed. This encourages the roots to grow into the soil in search of water. Turfgrass needs an average of 1 inch of water per week to stay green and growing.
- If the sod is laid in the spring, 2 applications of fall fertility should be applied. The first between August 15 and September 15 containing slowly available nitrogen (N) sources and high potassium (K), and the second application around the end of October containing quickly available nitrogen (N) sources and high potassium (K). Most manufacturers have a *Winterizer* for this purpose. Apply no more than 1 lb of Nitrogen (N)/1000 square feet. Check the bag for application rates.
- If sod is laid in fall, apply just the late fall fertilizer application.
- Keep the mowing height as high as possible throughout the spring and fall. At the last mowing of the year, reduce the mowing height to remove more of the leaf surface. This will reduce winter injury and disease issues. Take care not to scalp the grass.

During the Second Year

- It is a natural response for grass to grow in the spring. There is no need to apply any early fertility.
- A fertilizer application can be used in mid-May. This application should contain slow release sources of Nitrogen (N). Apply no more than 1 lb of Nitrogen (N)/1000 square feet.
- Once again maintain the grass at the highest height possible.
- Irrigate as needed to supplement rainfall and encourage deep roots.
- Application of weed control should not be needed if you are performing the rest of the activities correctly. If weeds are appearing weed control can be used in September.
- Apply the two fall fertilizer applications as suggested in the first year.

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