

Laying Sod

The advantages of sod over seeding a lawn are the instant gratification of a new lawn, assurance of a thick and even establishment of grass, assurance of true grass variety, and less invasion of weed plants during establishment. The drawbacks are that it is hard work, tough on the back! Generally it is more expensive, running at least five dollars per yard for just the sod. And finally sod does not store well so the area must be ready to go and the sod laid as soon as it arrives. Below are the steps to successful sod installation. Check the internet or your Oakland gardening experts for more information.

The time to lay sod is early morning before it gets too hot. The soil in the planting area should be moist, not soggy or dry. Water thoroughly one or two days before the sod is delivered so that the top several inches of soil are wet. Then allow time for the soil to drain so that it's not muddy and is workable.

- Remove all vegetation, cultivate and rake clean all debris. Level area carefully to avoid humps and bumps. Water evenly to a depth of several inches, and allow to drain so soil is workable and not muddy.
- Apply a fertilizer. Do not rake in.
- Make sure the sod is moist. Sod should be moist but not wet. Wet sod is even more difficult to handle and may tear when carrying.
- Start with the longest straight edge. Start laying the sod along a long walk or other straight edge. If irregular, pull a string down the middle and start there. If laying along walk, bump up hard against edge. Empty gaps will dry out the edges of the sod.
- Fit your pieces of sod tightly against each other without overlapping. This is very important for a good look. Avoid leaving divots in the dirt with your feet as you work. Don't damage the sod as you move it.
- On the next row stagger the pieces so they lay like a brick pattern. Make sure the edges are tucked against each other tightly. Remember, the edges of the sod dry out first. If you leave gaps there will be dry or dead spots throughout the lawn.
- The lawn will get tracked up and rutted as the sod is laid, so level the surface as you go with a rake. This will help you keep an eye on the straightness of the rows as you proceed.
- The sod will either come up short or hang over the edge at the end of a row. Use a sharp sod knife to trim carefully along the edge, so the sod fits tightly on all edges.
- Nobody is perfect. There will be some small gaps and open seams you miss as the sod is laid. Pack potting soil or peat moss in any gaps. The sod will fill in the spots rapidly as it establishes. Don't try to add in small pieces. They will just dry out and die.
- Watch out for irrigation heads. Flag any irrigation heads, and utility caps and cut sod around them so they don't get sodded over.
- Roll the sod with a water-filled roller. Most tool rental centers have them. This is a step tempting to skip but important. The sod must have good contact with the soil or the roots will be exposed to air and die. Fill the roller 1/2 full of water. Roll perpendicular to the rows of sod.
- Water, water, and water. Apply enough to wet the soil 6-8 inches. That usually means a daily watering for a couple of hours. Use a hand sprinkler to make sure odd areas and edges get sufficient water. Mow to height of 3 inches after 10 days or when the grass has grown 2 inches.

Laying Sod for a New Lawn