



STARNOTE 805  
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# PLANTING A NEW LAWN FROM SOD

*Plant it right for Lasting Beauty*

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Using sod to create your desert lawn produces results very quickly. Call it instant gratification! In less than one day, your yard is transformed from bare dirt to a lush, green lawn. Unlike seed, sod can be successfully installed all year, even during extremes of heat and cold. Preparing for a sod yard is much like preparing the lawn for seed. Follow these steps in sequence:

- ◆ **Replacing an old lawn?**
- ◆ **Installing a new lawn?**
  - ◆ **Install a quality sprinkler system**
  - ◆ **Rake and level**
  - ◆ **Water the planting area**
  - ◆ **Lay the sod**
  - ◆ **Water thoroughly after installation**
  - ◆ **Keep grass height high**
  - ◆ **Fertilize lightly**
  - ◆ **After sod is established**

**Replacing an old lawn?** Kill and clean existing weeds and turf from the lawn area. If redoing a previously sodded yard, remove the old sod completely. Use a herbicide like *Round-up*<sup>®</sup> or *Com-Pleat*<sup>®</sup> that does not leave a toxic residue. These products work best on actively growing weeds and grasses. Water thoroughly, wait a day or so, then apply the herbicide according to label instructions. A second application 1-2 weeks later may be necessary to kill all grass and weeds. Remove all vegetation after it is completely brown. Clear the area of rocks and other debris. Add organic soil amendments like *PayDirt*<sup>®</sup>, *Organic Compost* or *Humus Gro* at the rate of 2 cubic feet per each 25 square feet and roto-till as deeply as possible. Remove underground obstructions as you encounter them. If heavy clay and caliche-riddled soil makes it impossible to roto-till, break soil surface with a pick or digging bar and add a 4-6 inch layer of topsoil over the area. Use a landscape rake to level out the high and low spots. ([top](#))

**Installing a new lawn?** If you can, and prefer to roto-till your soil, clear the area of rocks and other debris. Add organic soil amendments like *PayDirt*<sup>®</sup>, *Organic Compost* or *Humus Gro* at the rate of 2 cubic feet per each 25 square feet and roto-till to a 6 inch depth. Remove underground obstructions as you encounter them. If deep tilling is not possible, loosen the soil surface and add a 4-6 inch layer of topsoil over the area. Use a landscape rake to level out the high and low spots.

Often it is easier to purchase landscape soil with organic amendments already added. You should provide 4 to 6 inches of good soil beneath your new sod to keep it healthy for

many years. ***Insufficient soil will cause substantial problems often within 2 years, and demand extra water in order to keep the turf alive.***

## **QUALITY SOIL BENEATH YOUR LAWN IS KEY TO IT'S HEALTH AND LASTING BEAUTY!**

[\(top\)](#)

**Install a quality sprinkler system** to insure successful lawn establishment. Unless the area is extremely small, watering by hand is very labor intensive, time consuming and may not be successful, especially during the hot summer months. A Star Nursery irrigation specialist will help you plan the system best suited to your needs. Do not install sprinkler heads until final grading and leveling has been completed. [\(top\)](#)

**Rake and level** the area for final grading and removal of stones. Broadcast a starter fertilizer like *Dr. Q's<sup>®</sup> Sod & Seed Starter* at the rate of 1 pound per 250 square feet and lightly rake into the soil surface. Now install the sprinkler heads. Pop-Up sprinkler heads assure that the grass does not block the spray, and that you get good coverage. 4 inch pop-ups are generally superior for most applications. Adjust placement height for the thickness of the sod mat (usually 1 inch) and recommended grass mowing height before cutting sprinkler risers. [\(top\)](#)

**Water the planting area** the day before your sod arrives. Several short irrigations, an hour apart, should soak the ground to a depth of 6 inches or more while preventing runoff. This will allow the sod to root more quickly. Palleted sod builds up heat very quickly. For best results, **plan to lay your sod the same day it arrives.** [\(top\)](#)

**Lay the sod** along the longest straight line from back to front. Work from this line to avoid stepping on the freshly placed sod. Butt edges and ends together tightly. Lay strips of sod in a brick pattern to minimize visible lines while it establishes. Avoid splicing curved and angled areas with small pieces and strips. The bigger the piece, the better it will root. Use a sharp sod knife to make clean, defined edges around trees, sprinklers and contours. Use a water roller to insure good sod contact with the ground after installation. [\(top\)](#)

**Water thoroughly after installation.** New sod should be kept very wet for 10 days to 2 weeks. Water 3 to 6 times a day depending on the weather- -more often in summer, less often in colder weather. After a week or so, check rooting progress by gently tugging on individual strips. If the sod doesn't come up easily, the rooting process is well under way. If it still hasn't begun to root and shows gray, dry looking areas, increase the water. If the sod is too wet this can also cause it to fail to root properly. Keep foot traffic off the sod until it is well rooted. [\(top\)](#)

**Keep grass height high** for the first few cuttings. With fescue let it reach a 4 or 5 inch height before mowing; take an inch off the top; wait a few days and do it again. Mow when grass blades are dry, then water. Be sure your mower blades are sharp. Low-cutting new sod can disturb the strips and damage new roots. [\(top\)](#)

**Fertilize lightly** after the second mowing with a seasonal lawn fertilizer. To avoid changing fertilizers every season, try *Royal Flush<sup>™</sup>* year round. This newly developed, premium lawn food will condition your soil while providing long-lasting, complete and balanced nutrition for your grass. Other seasonal fertilizers are available for your every

need. A friendly Star Nursery Associate will help you make the right choice. Continue to fertilize throughout the growing season as needed. [\(top\)](#)

**After sod is established** , usually a month or so, water according to weather and soil conditions. Use the Southern Nevada Water Authority *Lawn Care Watering Guide* to establish a responsible, efficient watering schedule. Watch your lawn carefully, check water coverage, adjust sprinklers as needed and use hand watering to deal with any "hot spots" (smoky gray areas) that might arise during hot or windy weather. No need to water the entire lawn to fix a few small problem spots. [\(top\)](#)