



**HORTICULTURE FACT SHEET**  
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**Sodding the Home Lawn**

**Sod Versus Seed**

More and more people choose sod as a way to establish their lawns. Although initially more expensive than seed, sod has several advantages: (1) the lawn is established faster—2 to 3 weeks to root firmly compared to 3 to 4 months for seed; (2) sod can be put in at midsummer when seeding is difficult; (3) a lawn can be established more readily on a steep slope or terrace with sod; and (4) sodding can repair a bare area on an already established lawn.

**How to Choose Your Sod**

Use only top quality sod. High quality sod will contain permanent grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass and/or creeping red fescue and will be acceptably green and free of weeds. Bluegrass and bluegrass blends are used in most sod grown in Minnesota. Only limited amounts of bluegrass-creeping red fescue blends are grown here.

Consider whether your site is sunny or shady. If shady use a Kentucky bluegrass-creeping red fescue mixture or a mixture containing A-34, Nugget, or Glade, which are shade-tolerant bluegrasses.

The two types of bluegrass sod vary in their management requirements. One type is composed of one or more nonelite or common cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass such as Park, Newport, Delta, and Common. The other type contains one or more elite cultivars such as Merion, Victi, Pennstar, and Baron adelphi. The elite bluegrasses are adapted to a lower clipping height (1 to 1½ inches) and produce a denser, dark green turf than the common types. However, these elite cultivars require more intensive management than the common types. For example, they require 3 to 4 pounds of actual nitrogen (N) per 10,000 square feet per year compared to 2 to 3 pounds of actual nitrogen (N) for the common cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass.

**Site Preparation**

Prepare the proposed site properly before the sod is delivered. You need 8 to 10 inches of topsoil (see Extension Bulletin 366, *The Home Lawn*). Modify the topsoil by incorporating 2 to 3 cubic yards of peat per 1,000 square feet to a depth of 6 to 8 inches.

Have a soil test of the proposed site taken and correct any known nutritional deficiency. Thoroughly incorporate the specified amounts of lime, phosphorus, and potassium into the upper 6 inches of your topsoil before sodding or seeding.

Weed problems on your site also should be controlled before sodding. Amitrole or dalapon (nonselective grass killers) will control the weedy, coarse-textured perennial grasses such as tall fescue and quackgrass. Apply the chemical according to label instructions before sodding.

**Sodding Procedure**

After the topsoil is ready prepare the soil in the same way you would when seeding a lawn. Eliminate large clods of soil and remove any debris. Sod needs a smooth, uniform surface. After grading, rake ½ pound of actual nitrogen (N) into each 1,000 square feet. The soil should be moist before sodding.

Because caring for unlaied sod involves a great deal of work, lay the sod as soon as possible after delivery. If the sod is to be held more than 24 to 48 hours, spread it out on a flat surface, grass side up, and keep it moist.

Lay the first course or row of sod along a straight line across the width of the site. Then, in the next row, stagger the end joints as if laying bricks. The individual sod pieces should be placed close to one another but should not overlap. Do not stretch the sod during the laying process.

Work some prepared topsoil into any noticeable joints or seams that develop between the sod pieces. This will prevent excessive drying of the ends of the pieces and avoid spaces between the sod pieces. When laying sod on a slope work from the lowest point up to the top. Lay the sod strips across, not up and down, the slope. On steep slopes pegging or staking is necessary. Three 6- to 8-inch stakes will anchor each strip of sod to the slope.

**Maintaining a Newly Sodded Lawn**

Keep the sod well-watered but not saturated, until it is firmly rooted into the soil (2 to 3 weeks). During this time prevent concentrated traffic on the sod. After it is firmly rooted, the sodded area is managed like any other established lawn.

If you want green turf for the entire growing season, supply approximately 1 inch of water to the lawn every week. (Part of the water may be supplied by rainfall.) Mow your sodded lawn when it reaches 1 inch above the desired cutting height. Three weeks after laying the sod, apply ½ pound of actual nitrogen (N) per 1,000 square feet. After this initial fertilization, follow the recommended fertilization program described in Extension Bulletin 366.

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