

Home and Garden

Four steps to a new, healthy, green lawn

A lovely new lawn could be just two weekends away if you follow this checklist of steps to take

Before you begin

Measure the area where you want to lay sod or seed and calculate the square footage by multiplying the width by the length. If using sod, call and reserve the amount you'll need and schedule delivery on the day you will finish soil preparation.

Check with local rental services about reserving a tiller, roller and landscaper's rake for the next two weekends.

Necessary supplies

Large rake, rototiller, peat moss to amend soil, wide board or old ladder to drag and level soil, fertilizer for new lawns, seed, hydroseed or sod, roller, sprinklers or irrigation system to keep new lawn well-watered.

First Saturday

Prepare your soil. Remove big weeds and rocks and then rototill the area to a depth of at least six inches. The deeper you can loosen the soil, the deeper the roots will grow and the less care from you the lawn will need.

First Sunday

Improve your soil. Work 2 to 3 inches of Canadian sphagnum peat moss or a peat moss/compost blend into the top 6 to 8 inches of soil. Organic matter like peat moss helps sandy soil to retain moisture and loosens and improves drainage in clay or hard-packed soil.

Second Saturday

Level and rake. Drag a ladder or wooden plank across the new lawn area to make sure the bed is level and free of dips. If you rent a landscaper's rake, go over the ground twice to smooth out the rough spots.

Second Sunday

Once the soil is tilled, amended and leveled, it's time to add fertilizer. Make sure you spread a lawn food especially formulated for new lawns.

At last you're ready to spread seed or sod the area. Hand seeding or seeding with a drop spreader is the least expensive. After sprinkling the soil with seed, top it off with a thin layer of peat moss (no more than 1/4 inch deep). This will help keep the seed from blowing away or drying out.

Sodding gives instant gratification and because you start with a thick grass carpet, there is less trouble with invading weeds. After you lay sod, be sure to fill in the cracks between the sections with peat moss. This will help the sod sections to knit together quickly.

Once the seed or sod is down, all you have to do is keep the new lawn well-watered until established. The soil should be moist at all times, but not wet. This could mean watering twice a day in hot weather or once a week if it rains.

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