

WATERING YOUR NEW LAWN OR SPORTS TURF

WATERING/IRRIGATION – Irrigation is performed primarily to provide an adequate supply of moisture for turf grass growth and development. Turf is also irrigated to wash in fertilizers and some pesticides following application, to maintain sufficient surface moisture to promote germination of newly planted lawn and inter-seeded turf grasses, and to modify turf grass tissue temperatures on hot days by a practice called *syringing*. We never want to exceed the infiltration capacity of the soil. When water starts to “pool” or run-off the surface, we have exceeded the infiltration capacity of the soil and water should stop immediately.

GERMINATING THE GRASS SEED – Seedling development and subsequent survival are dependent on planting depth, available moisture, temperature, sufficient light, and the amount of food contained within the seed itself. Emerging seedlings are highly prone to desiccation since their capacity to secure moisture from the soil is limited by a relatively undeveloped root system and rapid water loss by evaporation from the surface soil. In heavenly shaded environments, the seedlings may not receive sufficient sunlight for photosynthetic production of food in quantities necessary to sustain growth.

WHEN WILL I SEE NEW GROWTH? – Air temperature, ground temperature, available moisture, and sunlight affect the germination times of seed. Most ryegrass and fescue will germinate in 7-14 days. Kentucky bluegrass germinates in about 20-25 days.

WHEN CAN I MOW? – By the 3rd to 4th week, you should be mowing for the first time. Starting out, mowing’s heights should be at 1”-2” for the first 4 weeks to promote lateral root growth and density. As you get into the 5th week and beyond proper mowing heights based on seed type should be between 2.5”-3.5”. *Please consult us for proper mowing heights*. Do not let clippings accumulate on the lawn, as smothering of new seedlings may occur. Be careful on the ends when turning your mower around as the tires can cut through the new grass. Three point turns and wide turns on the ends will help elevate damaging the lawn from the tires of your mower.

WHAT ABOUT WEEDS? – New seedlings can be harmed by weed control. It is normal for some weeds to grow whenever the soil has been disturbed. Once the grass is strong enough to handle traffic and has been mowed 2-3 times, broadleaf and grassy weeds can be killed.

FINAL THOUGHTS – Turf grass management is defined as the range of activities, including cultural practices, for establishing and sustaining turf at a desired level of quality. Where turf grass quality is below an acceptable level, it is usually due to mismanagement and/or weather conditions. Proper turf grass management involves the following:

- 1) Selection of well-adapted turf grasses.
- 2) Acceptable establishment procedures.
- 3) Proper mowing, fertilization, and irrigation practices.
- 4) Proper cultivation and associated practices.
- 5) Proper pesticide selection and use.

Your soil type plays a big role in the health and growth of the newly planted grass. Organic matter, pH values, and nutrients must be in the acceptable ranges to ensure the turf grass plant is getting what it needs. Values outside of the required ranges will greatly affect the turf grass plant even to a point of death. Shady lawns are of extremely difficulty because of the tree canopy absorbing or filtering out the blue light spectrum which in turn causes a thinning out then death of the plant. Over all there are a lot of factors to go into planting and maintaining a beautiful lawn.

As you can see growing and maintaining a healthy lawn is no accident. There are many factors that drive growth; i.e., fertilizer, water, temperature, and sunlight! Depending on the time of year, adjustments will be necessary. Following our recommendations will help insure your success!

WATERING / IRRIGATION SETUP OF YOUR NEWLY PLANTED LAWN

DAY ONE! – At the start and for the first 3 weeks irrigation should be set up to watering everyday. Watering times for each day should be split into multiple start times i.e., 6:00 am, 10:00 am, 2:00 pm, and 6:00 pm. Each zone should be set for approximately 6-8 minutes, but you should not have any “pooling”, “standing”, or “run-off from water on top of soil. If this happens then back down each zone watering times to say 4-6 minutes.

The whole purpose of this set-up is to keep the soil moist and from drying out during the “germination” and seedling time frame. As soils and infiltration capacities can and will differ from lawn site to lawn site, special care needs to be considered against *over watering!* Visually inspect your lawn to make sure water is not running down slopes, eroding the soil, or pooling in the yard. If this is the case, then watering times should to be adjusted down. Again, the objective is to keep the surface moist not soaking wet.

IN THE 3rd to 4th WEEK – As the seedlings develop and get to “4-6 leaf stage”, we want to continue the daily “split” watering times, however weekly watering schedule should move to “odd-day” watering. The surface may be allowed to dry down on “even-days”, but the root zone must still be kept moist. Changes to watering “zone-times” may need to be adjusted. Consideration for 1st mowing needs to be evaluated.

Your 1st mowing should take place or have taken place by now. Mowing heights for the first cut of newly installed lawn should be no more than 1”-2” in height. Frequent weekly mowing of 2-3 times per week should take place as frequency mowing stimulates lateral root growth and a dense turf grass community. Mowing on **non-watering** days should take place.

BY THE 6TH WEEK AND BEYOND – Weekly mowing’s should be underway. Your new turf grass community needs approximately 1.5” of water every 7 days, minus any rain received. This will provide adequate growing moisture for excellent lawn performance.