

SOD INSTALLATION TIPS

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Installation of sod can be a rewarding and satisfying event in landscape enhancement. Below are some of the most common concerns you need to know about sod installation!

1. Storage

Sod should be stored in a shaded area and/or covered when possible. Lightly mist the pallet of sod during the course of the installation, especially if the sod is exposed to direct sunlight and winds.

2. Ground Preparation

Examine the soil and overall suitability of the site. Is the soil heavy (clay) or light (sandy)? Does the soil contain gravel or large stones on the surface, or just below the soil? Were any items "dumped" at the site such as chemicals, gas, oil, construction materials, cement or gravel? If so, these should be removed. A soil test should be done in order to add proper fertilizer types and amounts. The area should be roto-tilled.

3. Finished Grade

The final grade should be smooth, and level where possible. Avoid sharp dips and "lumps" at grade level. Remove as many stones as possible. Hand raking helps provide a uniform surface to accept the sod. If the soil is too soft, the sod will sink, edges will dry out and the mower will rock up and down and cause poor mowing.

4. Direction and Patterns

Start by laying the sod with the "long" edge of the sod running with the length of the site (if the site is not drastically sloped). A sidewalk may be used as a starting point, if it's long and straight. If there are no straight lines to work from, string a line across the job site. Make sure that the last row of sod strips are at least 6" -8" wide where they will lay against a finished edge.

On hills and highly sloped areas, start the sod running lengthwise across the hill. This will prevent the sod *[from sliding downhill]*. Stake sod pieces on steep slopes accordingly.

5. Joining Sod Pieces

The ends of the sod must be staggered-like cement blocks in a wall. This prevents the sod from sagging downhill on slopes, and helps the ends from drying out as well. Staggered ends also allow the sod pieces to "disappear" more quickly.

6. Handling Edges

The cut edges should be slightly curled downward before the sod pieces are finally set in place. Curling under the short edge (lip) of the sod allows the sod edges to meld together after the sod is rolled. This minimizes drying out which can occur at the edges if the sod shrinks after placement.

7. Clean Cuts

Cut around fixed obstacles (fixtures, walkways, bed edging, etc.) with a sharp knife. If the sod is "undercut," drying out will occur. If the sod is overcut, the sod may be elevated and not be in contact with the underlying soil, which in the worse case results in no root contact. Thus, this piece of cut turf may dry out and die. Make cuts around objects first, so if need be, re-cuts are still possible before the rest of the sod pieces are installed in that row.

8. Roll the soil in two directions. This forces the sod into the prepared soil bed for quicker rooting. Rolling also pushes the sod pieces together, which helps minimize drying out. Again, **ROLL the sod IN TWO DIRECTIONS!**

9. Irrigation

Water the sod afterward. Remember, sod is a full turf cover, with only $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ " of soil with shallow roots.

Water the sod 3 to 4 times daily for short intervals for 10 to 14 days. Water the turf at 8 AM, 10 AM, 12, AM, 2 PM and again in at 4 PM. After the sod begins to "knit" and is hard to pull up in the middles of each sod piece, begin to water once per day, for a longer period of time. Do that for 1 week. Then irrigate every other day for 2 weeks. Then, if the soil can intake and hold enough water, irrigate early every third morning (irrigate, skip 2 days, irrigate day 3, skip 2 days... repeat). See www.ag.arizona.edu/AZMET for turf irrigation amounts and other information.

10. Fertilizer after the new sod has knitted and been mowed at least once: as a general rule, apply between $\frac{1}{4}$ to 1.2lb.N per 1000ft² when the turf is actively growing.