

New Sod Care in Colorado

First 2 Weeks

The key to establishing new sod is to keep it properly watered for the first month. Immediately after installing sod, water thoroughly making it spongy to the step. The new sod should be kept thoroughly wet to a depth of 4" to 6" and watered 3 to 5 times a day during the first 7 to 14 days depending on the season. Lift a corner of the sod to determine the depth of moisture. In the first week, it is very important to keep the new sod damp. During this time stay off the sod so it can take root and you do not sink in and leave depressions from your foot steps. During hot weather, sprinklers should run several times a day so the new sod never dries out. If allowed to dry out, the sod will shrink, brown, and can die. The roots of your new sod will penetrate the soil faster and root down sooner if properly watered.

Mow if Grass at End of Week 2 or if height exceeds 3.5"

Your new lawn should be mowed at the end of week 2 or if your lawn exceeds 3 1/2" tall. Back off on the watering so the turf is dry to the touch and firm enough to walk on without sinking in. If your new lawn reaches over 3 1/2", mow off a third of the length even if it has not been two weeks. Do not cut shorter than 2" for the first few times you mow. Exercise caution the first time you mow so you do not damage or pull up the sod. If some of the sod does move around, don't worry. Just put it back in place and it will grow in.

Weeks 3 and 4

The following 2 weeks are used to transition from frequent daily watering to fewer cycles per day and increase the number of days between waterings. During week 3, reduce waterings to 1-3 times per day and skip a day between watering if the new sod is not drying out. By week 4, water 1 to 2 times every other day. After week 4, your new yard should be ready to go 2 to 3 days between watering. Water your lawn in the evening or early morning when less evaporation occurs. To reduce run-off on hills and promote deep root growth, reduce watering times in half. One hour later, run the irrigation cycle again and apply the rest of the water. This allows the water to soak into heavy soils.

Rest of the Season

Your new lawn will need more water the first growing season and especially the first 6 months. As roots grow deeper over the course of a year, it will need less water. If your lawn looks dry, it probably needs watering. The key to new sod care during this time is deep watering less frequently. This will help the roots grow down and develop a deep root system that uses less water. It is ok after the first two months to stress your lawn a little. This means let your yard dry out a bit and when you see signs of stress starting to appear, make sure to water. This will also allow you to fine tune the sprinkler system and adjust heads for proper coverage and change nozzles for more or less water in certain spots.

<https://gvt.net/turf-care/new-sod-care>

Established Lawn Care

Amount and Frequency of Application

Water as deeply and as infrequently as possible. This is not achieved by proper irrigation alone; a combination of proper irrigation, proper fertility and regular core aeration (once in spring and/or once in fall).

Amount

Apply 1 to 1.5 inches of water per irrigation. Place several shallow containers (such as baking pans) in different areas of the lawn for thirty minutes while irrigating. Measure, in inches, the depth of water accumulated in the containers. The average depth of water in these containers multiplied by two is the inches of water per hour emitted by the sprinkler system.

Clay soils (which include most Colorado soils) needs to be watered at a slower rate in order to avoid runoff and puddling. To avoid runoff from very heavy clay soil and/or a sloped lawn you can water for a short period, then stop and start back up again until 1 to 1.5 inches of water has accumulated. This cycle may be as short as 5 minutes. This is best determined by the appearance of water running off the area being irrigated.

Frequency

Irrigate when the turf indicates water is needed. Look for signs of wilt, which often show up in the same location on the lawn time after time. **Footprints or lawn mower tracks that remain at least one-half hour after traffic has passed indicates irrigation is needed.** Turf will also turn a shade of blue-gray when it is water stressed and in need of irrigation.

Do not irrigate again until you see signs of wilt. It's important that the soil profile dries somewhat between irrigation applications. Continually water-logged soils are deprived of oxygen which is required for proper root growth.

On very hot days turf may appear stressed even if the soil is wet. This is caused by heat stress and can be remedied by cooling off the turf by wetting it for 15 seconds or less.

Time of Day to Irrigate

The best time to irrigate your lawn is between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Winter Watering

Lawns started within the last year need occasional winter irrigation. Winter watering may not be necessary for established lawns. Areas of Colorado which experience open, dry winters are more susceptible to winter grass mites and desiccation if occasional winter irrigation is not applied. **Water only when air temperatures are above 40 degrees F and apply water at mid-day so it will have time to soak in before possible freezing at night.** A solid layer (persisting for more than a month) of ice on lawns can cause suffocation or result in matting of the grass.

<http://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/watering-established-lawns-7-199/>