



Watering Instructions for Newly Seeded Lawns

Watering is the most important factor in establishing a new lawn. Newly seeded lawns that are watered regularly germinate more quickly, establish more densely, and crowd out potential weeds more effectively than non-watered lawns. Without frequent watering, the new seed will not germinate as quickly or as uniformly; allowing weeds and/or old grasses to potentially re-establish themselves in the lawn. Watering is the responsibility of the property owner.

Watering Areas Seeded Into Bare Soil

Once the grass seed has been planted, it is important to begin frequent, light irrigation with enough water to keep the soil surface *constantly dark and moist*. To do this, watering should be performed one to three times daily, depending on how quickly the soil dries. Germinating seed does not have roots yet; therefore, there is no need to water heavily. For smaller areas, it is usually easiest to water the lawn by hand with the hose nozzle set at a heavy mist. Simply spritz the soil in a uniform pattern to a point just before the ground puddles, moving backwards to avoid trampling in the wet seedbed. For larger areas, or for convenience, you may use an oscillating sprinkler (the kind that produces an overhead arch from right to left and back, but be sure to move it before any significant puddling occurs! Leaving a sprinkler in one spot too long may cause seed and soil to erode. **We do not recommend the use of sprinklers that shoot water on a plane parallel to the ground because the horizontal force of the water often dislodges seed and soil upon impact with the ground.** Make sure that the sprinkler hits all of the seedbed and watch for puddling or erosion in any overlapped areas. If you have an irrigation system, turn it on *manually* and monitor how long it takes to soak the surface without causing excessive puddling. Then, set the system to run for that amount of time or the next lower increment available.

Watering over seeded Areas

If your lawn has been over seeded (with a slice-seeder) most of the precautions listed above will not be a factor since in most cases there are existing grasses or weeds growing that will anchor the soil and minimize potential erosion. In this case, water as outlined above using any watering tools you may have. The existing grasses or weeds will help keep moisture on the seedbed longer than in bare soil, so it may not be necessary to water as frequently in this situation. Check the soil surface to make sure it is damp or wet when deciding if watering is needed. You may need to concentrate on watering full sun and bare areas more often than shady areas and areas with thicker grass or weed cover.

General Notes

Watering large areas can be a time consuming task; therefore, it is important to maximize your efforts. The best time to water is at dusk, or shortly thereafter, because it will keep the soil moist throughout the night. The areas should then be watered again early to mid-morning, before the soil dries out from the night before. If it is cool (below 75°) or overcast, it is often beneficial to water again around mid-afternoon. If it is hot (above 75°) and sunny, watering in the afternoon may not be worth the effort because the solar heat may evaporate the water before it can be utilized by the seed.

If the re-seeded lawn areas are too large to be completely watered at one time, break the areas into as many sections as needed to ensure that each section can be thoroughly watered at one time. Then, choose one section per day and water it two to three times as described above. Rotate between the sections on a daily basis. Once the seed begins to germinate and establish you may find that one section needs more attention than another, and the watering regimen can be adjusted to cover that area more often.

Once the lawn begins to establish (4-6 weeks), it will no longer be susceptible to severe erosion. At this time the watering practices should be adjusted to put down about ½" of water every 3 to 4 days, depending on the weather. This is approximately 1 hour per section with average water pressure. To more accurately measure how much water is being put down set a rain gauge or coffee can under the sprinkler and time how long it takes to fill it to the ½" mark. Continue to water the lawn throughout the fall until temperatures are consistently below 50° F (or until the beginning of December). This will help ensure that the lawn establishes properly before the onset of potentially damaging winter conditions. If seeding in the spring, water the lawn as described above until the lawn is thick and dense; (approximately 8-12 weeks). Since grass plants take up to one full year to fully mature, it is very important to water spring seeded lawns throughout any dry spells during the first summer. Otherwise, some of the new seed may be killed if the weather conditions are severe.