



# Tips for Successful Sod Replacement — Working With a Landscape Professional

Resodding your landscape can be expensive. Without proper site preparation and post-installation care, sod can die almost as easily as any other newly planted plant material. If the work is being done by a landscaping company, be sure to ask that the best management practices below are followed.

## Working with a landscape company:

- Ask the landscape company for a time schedule for delivery and installation of your new sod.
- Verify that proper soil preparation (including tilling 4–6 inches deep, raking and moistening) occurs before planting.
- Inspect the sod carefully upon delivery for weeds, insects or stressed areas.
- If installation is delayed, require the company to move the sod to a cool, shady place until planting begins. Sod life on pallets during the summer is less than 48 hours.
- After installation, check to see that the sod pieces fit together as tightly as possible, that no sod squares are stretched to fit an area and that no cracks are evident between pieces.
- Verify that the sod is tamped or rolled to remove air pockets. Roots that make good contact with the underlying soil help keep the sod from drying out during establishment.

## Irrigation for establishment:

New plant material, including grass (sod, seed, plugs, etc.), may initially need extra water applications to successfully establish. The need for this extra establishment period irrigation varies, depending on the type of plant material and the time of year.

The “establishment period” exemption in watering restrictions is generally limited to new plant material. An entire irrigation zone can be operated if at least 50% of the zone has new plant material. If a zone contains less than 50% new plant material, watering is limited to hand watering, use of a hose-end sprinkler or other method that targets just the new material.

## Establishment period watering schedule:

*More stringent local watering restrictions may apply. Always refer to your local government or utility guidelines first.* Except for the first day sod is laid, watering must be done during the normal allowable hours of the day.

**First 7–10 days:** It is better to irrigate 2–3 times a day for 5–10 minutes, especially on hot, sunny days when it is not raining. If the extra times cannot be accomplished, irrigate once a day, but only for 10 minutes. New sod has a very shallow root system and irrigating more than 10 minutes would waste water and be an unnecessary expense.

**Second 7–10 days:** Irrigate once a day; apply ¼" of water.

**Next 7–10 days:** Irrigate every other day; apply ½" of water.

**Additional 7–30 days (optional):** If sod has not pegged and you can still pull a piece out of place, irrigate no more than every other day, applying ½" to ¾" of water. In another 7–10 days, retest to see if it has pegged.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District’s year-round water conservation measures include a 60-day establishment period, which limits the allowable schedule for days 31 through 60. Even-numbered residences are allowed to irrigate new plants on Tuesday, Thursday and/or Sunday; odd-numbered residences can irrigate on Monday, Wednesday and/or Saturday.

After following these recommendations, or when establishment period exemption has expired (whichever comes first), reset the irrigation timer to the normal allowable watering days to provide a ½" to ¾" application of water.

## Additional tips and limitations:

- Skip extra establishment period applications on rainy days or in cooler months.
- Most sod is fertilized just prior to harvest, so wait until the sod has pegged (at least 30 days) before fertilizing.
- Don’t apply herbicides until the lawn has been mowed at least three times.

Southwest Florida  
Water Management District

WATERMATTERS.ORG • 1-800-423-1476

Florida-Friendly  
Landscaping™ PROGRAM



UF UNIVERSITY of  
FLORIDA  
IFAS Extension

