

HARDISON LANDSCAPING

Thanks for choosing Hardison Landscaping to install your new sod. These instructions are **only for the establishment phase**—the critical first few months when the sod takes root and bonds to your soil.

These are NOT instructions for long-term or ongoing lawn maintenance. After the sod is fully established (usually by the end of the first growing season), your lawn will need a different care routine. Hardison Landscaping always recommends that our clients hire a qualified lawn maintenance professional to keep their lawn looking perfect year-round. If you prefer to DIY, the **NC State Turf Files Extension** (<https://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/>) has excellent, locally tailored resources, including maintenance calendars, fertilization guides, mowing tips, weed control advice, and more — all specific to North Carolina lawns.

New sod can look a bit stressed right after installation (yellowing edges, wilting, or light browning). This is normal **transplant shock** — it's just adjusting to its new home and growing roots. It doesn't mean it's dying. During establishment, the main risk is **underwatering** (letting it dry out), which can cause shrinking, browning, or death. Overwatering only becomes a concern once the sod is fully established and roots are deep — so focus on keeping it consistently moist in these early stages.

NEW SOD IS EXTREMELY PERISHABLE. IT WILL DIE WITHOUT WATERING

The Easiest Way to Check Moisture

Lift up multiple corners of sod throughout the sodded area]=

- Soil underneath should feel **spongy and moist** (like a wrung-out sponge), not dry.
- Deeper check: Push a screwdriver 4–6 inches down — it should go in easily when moist enough.

Check daily in the first couple of weeks! If it's starting to dry, water immediately.

Signs your sod is drying out (watch for these, especially edges and seams):

- Grass blades shrivel up or curl.
- Sections of the lawn take on a **blue-grey** or dull, smoky color (instead of bright green).
- Areas of sod that border hard surfaces such as concrete, pavers, and gravel/stone dry up quicker – pay special attention to these areas.
- **Remember:** When establishing new sod, it's hard to give **too** much water. Keep the sod and soil beneath consistently wet/damp.

Quick Rules

- Water **deeply** (soak 4–6 inches down) but **consistently** during establishment — this builds deep roots.
- Best time to water: **Early morning** (before 10 AM). Avoid watering in the evening during the summer months to prevent Fungus.
- **Use a hose with a sprinkler** — We strongly recommend **tripod sprinklers** (the kind with adjustable height and wide coverage). You can pick one up at local stores like Home Depot or Lowe's for around \$50. They make even watering easy and effective without you having to move them constantly. Avoid hand-held hoses without a sprinkler attachment, as they make it hard to get even, deep coverage.
- **Stay off the sod as much as possible immediately after installation** — the lawn will be extremely squishy and wet from the initial watering, and foot traffic can create dips, compact the soil, or disturb the roots. Avoid excessive walking (including kids and pets) for at least 1–2 weeks, or until it's firm enough to walk on without sinking.

First 2 Weeks: Keep It Wet to Kickstart Roots

Water **immediately** after installation and keep the sod thoroughly moist.

- Water **1–2 times a day**, depending on the weather:
 - Hot/dry/windy summer: 2 times a day (morning must, plus afternoon).
 - Cooler spring/fall: 1–2 times a day.
- Each session: Run your tripod sprinkler **15–30 minutes per zone/area** (or enough to soak 4–6 inches deep). Adjust based on your sprinkler's coverage — move it as needed for even watering.
- Goal: Never let the sod dry out — dry sod shrinks, browns, and can die. Lift a corner daily to check for moisture beneath.
- Stay off it — roots need undisturbed time to grow down.

At the end of week 2: Let the surface dry a bit (still moist underneath) so it's firm enough to walk on and mow.

Weeks 3 & 4: Ease Off to Build Stronger Roots

Shift to fewer, deeper waterings so roots grow downward.

- **Week 3:** Water **2–3 times per week** — deeper soaks (4–6 inches). Let surface dry enough between to mow.
- **Week 4:** Drop to **1–2 times per week** — still deep.
- **By end of week 4:** Sod should be rooting well and ready for less frequent watering.

After Month 1 (Rest of First Growing Season): Deep & Less Often

Your new lawn needs more water as roots deepen (especially during the first 6–12 months).

- Water **deeply** (about 1 inch total per week, wetting 6+ inches down) but **less frequently** — 1–2 times a week, or only when needed.
- Signs it needs water: Footprints linger, grass looks bluish-gray, blades fold/wilt.
- After first 2 months: It's okay to let it stress slightly — dry a bit, watch for signs, then deep water. This builds tough roots.
- In clay: Water in cycles if runoff starts (water → wait 30–60 min → water again).

For ongoing care after establishment, please refer to the NC State TurfFiles resources or contact a local lawn pro. Note: Once established, overwatering can become a risk, leading to issues like rot or fungus.