PLANTING A NEW LAWN

SEED OR SOD?
The choice of seed or sod is one of patience and budget. Sod lawns cost more, but can be used almost immediately. Sod lawns do best in full sun. The preparation of the soil is the same for seed and sod. By choosing one of Sky Nursery's seed mixes, you can get a superior lawn tailored to your specific needs. Our mixes are carefully chosen blends of fescues and ryegrasses that perform especially well in our Northwest climate.

Showcase  Our best all-around mix for a durable, great-looking lawn.
Play and Fun  Rough and tumble durability. Does well in shade.
Custom Shade  Grows great in sun, but tolerates more shade than others.
Overseed  Germinates quickly, blends well with existing turf.
Water Warden  Most drought-tolerant blend. Slow to germinate, tall fescue.

PLANTING A NEW LAWN (April, May, June, September, October best times)
Good soil preparation before planting is essential for your lawn's long-term performance. To provide a good foundation for your new lawn, rototill generous amounts (2 to 4 inches) of compost into the existing soil. Rake the soil smooth, removing rocks and debris. Using a water roller, lightly compress the soil. If it's not smooth, rake again.

Apply, in any order, the following: seed (7 pounds per 1000 square feet), lime, and starter fertilizer (follow the instructions on the bag). Cover this with a very thin layer of peat moss (one 3.0 cubic foot bale covers about 350 square feet), coco coir, or Gardner & Bloome Soil Building Conditioner to hide the seed from birds and create a moist germination layer. Roll again with an empty roller. Keep moist for 2-4 weeks.

To plant sod, prepare the soil as above. Apply the fertilizer and lime to the soil before you lay down the sod. Be sure to stagger the end joints as you lay the sod out. Roll with an empty roller to ensure good contact. Rake or sweep lightly to raise the grass blades again. Then keep the new lawn moist for 2-4 weeks.

Mow the new lawn when it’s about 2-3 inches high. (Year-round mowing height should be 2-3 inches.) Fertilize with a regular lawn food (not a weed and feed) in about a month.

LAWN WATERING
Most of the year, watering your lawn should not be necessary. During dry spells, only 1 to 2 inches of water per week is necessary. If you use a sprinkler, use a wide shallow container to measure the water you’re putting on. Remember, long slow soakings once or twice a week are best. If water seems to be running off rather than soaking in, aerating your lawn may help. E-Z-Wet or Perc-o-late can help water penetrate deeply and then “wick” back up when needed. Setting your mowing height higher can reduce water needs by shading the ground and promoting deeper root growth. Improving your soil with extra compost can also promote deeper root growth and increased drought resistance.

LAWN FEEDING
When choosing lawn food, look for key words like organic, controlled (or slow) release, or water-insoluble. Granular (dry) fertilizers work better and longer than liquid ones. Sky recommends Dr. Earth Organic Lawn Fertilizer,
Hendrikus Organics Seasons 8-2-4, EB Stone Nature’s Green Lawn Food (a good size for smaller lawns) or Bonide Premium Lawn Food (not organic, but good). Some studies have indicated that organic fertilizers can help improve your lawn’s resistance to the fungus red thread. Fertilization frequency depends on what you want your lawn to look like. A minimum feeding schedule is twice per year (for example, in April and October). Best results are obtained by feeding approximately once each season (for example, Valentine’s Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving). The most important times to feed are fall and early spring (September, late November, & February)—those feedings support root growth, storing food for spring growth. Dolomite or calcitic lime should be applied in early spring (around Valentine’s Day), at a rate of about 2-4 pounds per 100 square feet. Fertilizer should never be applied to dry lawns and should always be thoroughly watered in. Apply at the rate recommended on the bag.

**RESEEDING** (April, May, June, September, October best times)
Before reseeding, thatch if necessary and aerate any hard compacted areas with a device that removes plugs of dirt. Mow the lawn about 30% shorter than normal. Fill in low spots with Sky Premium Planting Mix or Cedar Grove Lawn Performance Blend; if the depth of the fill is more than 2 inches, roll with a partially filled water roller to compact the soil. Apply seed, lime, and starter fertilizer, cover with peat moss, coco coir, or Gardner & Bloome Soil Building Conditioner, and thoroughly water. Treat the reseeded areas like a new lawn: keep moist for 2-4 weeks, fertilize again in about a month, and wait to mow until it’s 2 inches high.

**GRASS CLIPPINGS**
Since grass clippings are about 90% water and 9% fertilizer, leaving them on the lawn to decompose (grass-cycling) is beneficial if you do the following:

- Mow frequently enough to cut at most 1 inch on each mowing.
- Cut only when grass is dry (wet grass forms clumps on your lawn).
- Keep mower blades sharp so clippings are cut as small as possible.
- If you’re using a rotary mower, use a mulching blade.

**SOLUTIONS TO COMMON LAWN PROBLEMS**
The best prevention for all lawn problems is a thick, healthy, consistently fed lawn. Sky recommends feeding 3-4 times a year with an organic lawn food such as Dr. Earth. The recommended feeding schedule is Valentine’s Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day & Thanksgiving; the most important feedings are in the fall and early spring.

**CRANEFLIES**
The large mosquito-like insects seen in late summer are egg-laying adult craneflies. Eggs hatch into larvae (½” to 1 ½” gray-brown worms) that feed on turf grasses until cold weather drives them down into the soil where they stay dormant until spring. Damage appears as large irregularly-shaped dead areas, usually in April or May. Treatments can be applied in either mid October (for best control) or early April. Beneficial nematodes and Bonide Captain Jack’s Spinosad can help to control craneflies organically, or there are chemical controls available. For more information, consult a Sky Nursery employee.

**DROUGHT**
Grasses that do the best in the Puget Sound area are what are known as cool season turf grass. This means that as the summer heats up lawns will go dormant unless watered regularly.

Water infrequently and deeply, giving your lawn 1 to 2 inches of water per week. If water seems to pool or run off, aerating and top dressing with compost can help. Surfactants such as E-Z-Wet or Perc-o-late help water penetrate deeply and then “wick” back up to the roots. For best results apply in late spring and again in mid to late June.
Setting your mowing height higher can reduce water needs by shading the ground and promoting deeper root growth. Improving your soil with extra compost can also promote deeper root growth and increased drought resistance. Healthy turf will weather drought stress better, so make sure your grass starts the summer in good shape by following a good fertilizing and liming schedule. Do not fertilize with a fast-release (chemical) fertilizer if drought is anticipated! Fast-release fertilizer could encourage a growth spurt that would leave your turf susceptible to damage if watering is restricted.

GREENING UP A BROWN LAWN
The party’s Sunday—how do I get my lawn looking good FAST?? Sky carries several products that will help green-up a lawn quickly provided it is not completely dormant. Do not try to fertilize a dormant lawn (one that is already brown). The only thing that will revitalize a dormant lawn is water, and lots of it. If your lawn is not dormant, Sky carries several products that will quickly improve its color and lushness. Dr. Earth Lawn Fertilizer Spray, Scott’s Liquid Turf Builder, and Fertilome Chelated Liquid Iron are liquids, Miracle-Gro Lawn Food a soluble powder; all are sprayed on and absorbed by grass roots and blades. Sky does not recommend them in place of a regular (preferably organic) fertilizer program, but they are good for fast results.

MOSS
Moss in the lawn is a common, easily cured problem. It develops chiefly when the grass is stressed for one or more of four reasons:

- Low soil fertility (lawn needs more fertilizer).
- Soil too moist (lawn needs better drainage).
- Soil too acid/low pH (lawn needs more lime).
- Too much shade.

First kill the existing moss by using Lilly Miller Moss-Out, Worry Free Moss & Algae Control or Safer Moss & Algae Killer. To help prevent moss from coming back, aerate yearly or every other year, apply dolomite or calcitic lime each spring, and follow a regular fertilizing schedule. Lime not only stabilizes the pH, it also adds the nutrients calcium and magnesium, which are leached out by our heavy winter rains. Shade is best dealt with by limbing-up or thinning out trees and shrubs, and by yearly reseeding with more shade-tolerant grasses such as Sky’s Custom Shade Blend, Water Warden, or Play and Fun Blend.

MUSHROOMS/FAIRY RING
Mushrooms do not harm your lawn or plantings; our first recommendation is to pick or mow them if they are objectionable. If necessary, Consan-20 may be used to kill them. Lime is not effective against fungi. You can also drench the area with a wetting agent such as E-Z-Wet or Perc-o-late. To apply, punch holes 4-6” deep about one foot apart throughout the affected areas. Thoroughly water in. For the next month, drench the area daily using about one to two quarts of water per square foot.

RED THREAD
Red thread is a common Northwest turf fungus spread by wind and rain during conditions of high humidity and cool weather when grass is growing slowly. It appears as areas of cream to pink fuzz over irregular patches of lawn. Underfed and underlimed turf is most susceptible to it. Although the disease is not fatal, it can make your grass look rather sad. The best treatment is to mow 30% shorter than usual (collect and dispose of clippings) and give the lawn a good application of organic fertilizer and lime to help it outgrow the fungus. Organic fertilization has been shown in studies to help lawns resist red thread. Continue to feed every 30 to 60 days until the red thread is gone. When watering, long infrequent soakings are best. If chemical control is needed, Bonide Infuse or Bayer Advanced Fungus Control are listed as preventative controls.
THATCH
Over time some lawns develop a layer of old roots and grass stems between the grass and the soil surface called “thatch”. If this layer becomes too thick (¾” or more), water, air, and fertilizer cannot reach the grass roots and the lawn begins to thin out, especially in the summer. Keeping your grass mowed to a uniform height (2-3”) year round and using an organic fertilizer such as Dr. Earth or Down To Earth can help prevent thatch from accumulating. If your soil is in good shape, grass blades do not contribute to thatch because they are 99% water and fertilizer. Grass on soil that is compacted, low in organic matter, or depleted of soil microorganisms by excessive chemical use is more susceptible to thatch buildup. If you mow without a grass catcher, mow more frequently so that the cut blades are smaller, and keep your mower sharp.

If you do have a problem layer of thatch (an inch thick or more), remove it with a thatching rake or a power thatcher. For heavy buildups, cross-raking will be necessary. The lawn will look thin and sparse. Follow the directions for RESEEDING, and your lawn should quickly regenerate.

For thatch buildups of under an inch, or to prevent future thatch buildup, Sky carries a lawn treatment, Thatch Control, which will inoculate your soil with a strain of microorganisms that is particularly effective at breaking down grass fibers into lawn-feeding nutrients.

WEEDS
Many common lawn weeds (e.g. dandelions) are effectively controlled though consistent fertilization. They thrive under conditions of low fertility. Broadleaf weeds are best controlled from late spring through early fall by physical removal or by a weed killer. Granular weed and feed products work on the larger leaf weeds like dandelions but not on small leaf plants like clover. Liquid weed killers/herbicides such as Bayer All-In-One Lawn Weed & Crabgrass Killer™ used on warm, dry days work on both. Most herbicides work best at temperatures between 65°F and 75°F. Bonide has developed a lawn weed killer, Weed Beater Ultra™, which is effective in cooler temperatures (down to 45°F). Follow label directions carefully, particularly regarding rain or watering. Also, remember that any herbicide can affect reseeding; read your labels for more information. Never apply an herbicide at temperatures over 80°F.

Weed grasses must be dug out or spot treated with a glyphosate product (Roundup or Kilzall). These spots may be reseeded immediately if dug or about ten days after herbicide treatment. Unfortunately, there is no product that kills undesirable grasses without also destroying desirable ones! Greenlight Crabgrass Preventer can help if used early in the year. Crabgrass Preventer cannot be used if you are reseeding your lawn.

For pre-emergent weed control, Halts® will disrupt seed germination. An organic equivalent is corn gluten. Sky carries the brands Concern Weed Prevention Plus and Down To Earth Corn Weed Blocker. Corn gluten acts as an organic “weed & feed”; it feeds your existing grass while suppressing seed germination. Remember, though, any pre-emergent herbicide, including corn gluten, will not kill existing weeds. Moreover, they cannot be used in areas you will be reseeding (they will prevent lawn seed germination as well). Two or three applications between October and May may be needed to control weed grasses like annual bluegrass (Poa annua).

OTHER PROBLEMS
For problems not covered, please talk to us at Sky Nursery and we can help you deal with them in an environmentally sound, cost-effective manner.