

Installing Sod

It's that time of year again when Marana residents are beginning to make plans to dress up their landscape. While a wide variety of blooming shrubs and ground cover are more readily available this time of year, one common method to beautify a yard is to install sod.

There are a few considerations that we'll discuss to install your new lawn properly.

Before you begin anything, you'll need to consider what type of watering system you will utilize to maintain your lawn. Watering guidelines for Bermuda grass are recommended to be approximately three times daily for the first 14 days with duration of 5-10 minutes. For week three it can be reduced to once daily for 10-20 minutes (depends on how much water your soil can hold before runoff occurs). After the first three weeks, it can then be watered 2-3 times per week during the summer. It should be enough to penetrate 8-10 inches deep. Next, you need to decide if you will water with an automatic sprinkler system or manually (watering by hand or utilizing a sprinkler hose attachment). If you decide to have an automatic sprinkler system installed, be sure to have it installed prior to installing your turf. Consider obtaining at least 2-3 estimates from licensed contractors that work in your area. A licensed contractor will be able to guarantee the work performed will be free from defect due to poor workmanship.

Next, you'll need to choose the right area to install your new turf. Here are a few guidelines to selecting the right location. 1) Hard water stains from sprinkler overspray can result when the grass sits against your house or wall. Consider at least a 2-3 foot separation. 2) Try to avoid installing grass over any runoff/drain areas. The grass can act like a dam and restrict drainage from heavy rains. 3) Determine what type of edging you want to contain the grass. It can be as basic as plastic or rubber edging you may find at your local hardware store, or a hardscape edging such as concrete or brick.

Once you've determined a suitable location, you'll need to amend the soil. It is important that this step is done properly because most soils in the Marana area contain either a hard, compacted caliche or in Gladden Farms, you'll find a clay type soil. In either case, unless the soil is amended properly, the roots of the grass will not grow very deeply and water will not penetrate the soil deep enough. To do this effectively, you'll need a tiller to break up the top couple of inches of dirt. Next, use a rake to remove any hard clumps, rocks or other debris. Use your rake to establish a rough grade. The next step is to use the tiller to work the amendments 4-6 inches into the soil. The garden department of any hardware store can recommend which amendment products you have to choose from. After mixing in the amendments, you'll need to do the final grade on the soil to eliminate any high or low spots. You'll then need to use a roller (approximately 1/3 filled with water) to pass over the area 2-3 times. This will help identify if there is any raking or smoothing that is still needed. If so, smooth the area with a rake until proper grade is achieved.

Obtaining sod can be done one of three ways. You can purchase it from Home Depot or Lowe's (you'll need to find out which days their deliveries occur), you can order it from a nursery or you can order it directly from a sod supplier.

Once the grass is on site, you'll want to install it as quickly as possible to avoid it from drying out. Begin by laying the first roll of sod along a straight edge. Then, tightly butt the second roll against the first one. Be sure that each successive strip of sod that is installed tightly fits the ends and edges together. A tighter fit will accelerate its ability to mesh into one big carpet of grass instead of multiple pieces with separating lines. For any odd shaped areas you can use a knife to cut the sod to the desired shape. After laying all of the sod, you'll want to rent a sod roller again to pass over the grass 2-3 times to ensure good contact between the roots and the soil. Finally, apply a starter fertilizer and water the grass immediately thereafter. Be sure to have your watering system ready since the first 3 weeks are the most crucial for its establishment.

By following these few basic steps, you'll be on your way to enjoying a beautiful lawn in no time.

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