

Preparing the soil

The quality of your soil determines the future health of the grass plants in your lawn. It is the soil that provides oxygen, nutrients and moisture to the plants. Heavy, compacted soils will inhibit root development as the roots need the air spaces found in light loam in which to establish.

It follows therefore, that the soil is the foundation of a good quality lawn. Other requirements, such as supplementary nutrients, water and protection from disease can be carried out after the lawn has become established. However, these requirements will be far less if the basic growing medium is of the correct consistency and quality.

Never purchase top soil unless the supplier is prepared to reveal the details of its source. Some suppliers provide soils derived from river dredgings. This is completely unsuitable as it often contains silt soils contaminated with poisonous metals. Better to source a good organic loam or sand soil, preferably with a pH level of between 6 and 7. You should only need to import top soil if your existing soil is of poor quality or you need to build up the levels.

An important point to remember is not to spread new soil onto a compacted soil base. The different drainage rates between the two levels will cause untold problems. The base soil should always be well rotavated to allow a gradual blending of soils and time should be allowed for settling. This process can be helped by rolling or heeling the area.

It is worth spending the time on soil preparation because you cannot go back to it once your turf has established. Taking that little extra time at this stage can save hours to weeks of work in renovation later.

1. Always dig over, or preferably, deep rotavate the area to be turfed. If the top soil is not the best quality, or of insufficient volume, source a good supplier and add to the existing. It is best to use screened loam as it will not contain root weeds such as couch or nettles; also there will be no stones or clods which will make the job a lot easier.

2. Slight undulations are not really a problem provided they are gradual and allow for smooth passage of the mower. A bumpy foundation will cause scalping by the mower and the effect is not only unsightly, it can cause stress in the plants that are cut too low.

3. It is important that the prepared sight is free from weeds, seeds, stones, clods or any other debris. Hard, lumpy objects can prevent simultaneous rooting and it is most important that the grass takes evenly, as stressed plants can be overtaken by weeds or weed grasses or even die completely if deprived of contact with the base soil.

4. Once you have created a smooth, consolidated surface to the desired contours, we would recommend application of a pre-turfing fertiliser, i.e. Bonemeal (about 1oz per square metre of area).

When this is done, you are ready to take delivery of your turf rolls.

Each roll should be strong enough to support its own weight. It will contain mature grass plants, root fibre and just enough soil to maintain the plant during establishment. A thin cut, healthy turf will knit with the new soil much quicker than thick cut turf. It will also be much easier to handle.

In hot weather, the turf should be laid and watered within 24 hours of harvesting.

At Turfland, each load is harvested to order. The tools you will require to lay your lawn are a shallow tine rake, scaffold planks, a sharp knife and an edging iron. Place the rolls of turf in a convenient position for laying. Using your rake, just break the surface of the soil to form a tilth, pulling the rake towards you. Position your first row of turves, making sure that the ends are butted very close together. Use your sharp knife to shape the ends and conserve off-cuts for patching in.

When the first row is laid, place the scaffold plank on top. This will do three jobs:

1. Act as a straight edge for your next row.
2. Avoid indentations made by walking on the newly laid turf.
3. Evenly distribute the compression weight for good soil to turf contact.

Rake the next area to receive turf, using the same pressure and direction on the rake.

When starting the next row, start half a turf in, staggering the joints to prevent long gaps if shrinking occurs. When the line is complete, move the plank onto it and carry on in this way until the lawn is complete.

Start watering as soon as possible, preferably within an hour of laying. In dry conditions, water morning and evening until the turf is well rooted and thereafter as grass indicates requirement.

We hope your new lawn will give you many years of pleasure.