



Turfgrass Series

How to prepare a site before establishing turfgrass: weed control

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Establishment of a small residential lawn usually requires only general gardening skills. Typically, turfs can be established from seeds or vegetatively (from runners). The choice depends on the turf-grass species and the particular situation. Regardless of the method chosen, the steps in site preparation are almost identical.

Soil

Soil should be cultivated and if soil is poor, modified before planting. Proper preparation of the seed-bed, which for turf usually corresponds to the top 5 inches of the soil surface is required for the quick establishment of uniform turf. The goal is to create a fertile homogenous root zone with acceptable infiltration, aeration, and drainage. Therefore, starting with forming suitable seed-bed is essential. Major steps in producing the optimum seed bed (root zone) for turf establishment on small areas usually include: control of existing weeds, grading to assure pleasant appearance and proper water drainage, soil modification (often needed on Guam), removal of rocks and rubble and final smoothing the surface (raking).

After the site is prepared, turfgrass should be established as quickly as possible. If the soil is left bare, it will be subject to erosion and weed encroachment.

Control of Existing Weeds

Hard-to-control weeds should be the primary target at this stage. Many weeds with extensive root systems, such as nutsedge are hard to control after grass has been established, so they should be eliminated before establishment. At this stage chemical control with herbicides is necessary. Non-selective herbicides such as glyphosate could be used to eliminate all growing vegetation. Glyphosate virtually eradicates all plants that come in contact with

it. Because it enters the plant only through leaves or stems, glyphosate does not have long-lasting activity in the soil. Some weeds may escape the initial application and require a second application about two weeks later. Other (selective) herbicides can be used but because they can be toxic and dangerous if mishandled, it is better not to use them for residential lawns without help from trained and certified professionals.



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