

# HOW-TO Establish a Lawn

This guide has been written and compiled for the home handy person. Following these instructions will help you achieve an excellent result that you will be proud of.

However, for a truly professional finish, we suggest you contract a professional landscaper to do the job for you. The method followed in this guide is used by many professional landscapers but many will have their own individual variations or in some cases completely different approaches. Please remember, this is not the only method for establishing a lawn, just the method we have found to offer the greatest balance of cost and labour.

## DISCLAIMER:

The contents of this publication are intended as a general guidance only. Specifications are subject to change without notice. Centenary Landscaping Supplies cannot accept any liability whatsoever in respect to the content of this publication or the work performed using these methods. If you are unsure always seek the advice of professionals.

## STEP ONE Designing Your Lawn

Here's a few things you'll need to plan for before you SEED or TURF your lawn:

- A long narrow lawn will draw the eye along the length of the area. A feature such as a large tree or garden statue located at the end of this area will enhance this visual effect.
- You may need a paved pathway in heavy traffic areas. Lots of people walking the same route all the time may wear out the grass.
- Remember, you'll have to mow your lawn, no matter what species! So consider terrain and layout. Too steep and a mower will struggle, on sloping blocks terracing might be required.
- If the ground is too uneven, the mower will shear the grass so proper preparation is key. Try to avoid creating hard to get to places and corners, it needs to fit you and a mower don't forget.
- Totally flat lawns don't drain well and the grass growth is poor - particularly in heavier soils. If soil isn't sandy, sub-surface drainage may be required for a quality lawn.
- All parts of your lawn must receive direct sunlight at some part of the day in order for the grass to grow well. Areas that receive no direct sun may be the perfect place for a small paved area or mulched garden bed.
- Avoid having grass planting right up under the eaves of the house. This will restrict both rain and sunlight from reaching your lawn

Other considerations:

- Do you have kids, pets or both?
- How will your lawn be typically used?
- How much direct sunlight versus shade do you have in your garden?
- How much time do you have to care for your lawn?
- What type of soil does your property have and will you be excavating down and replacing that soil?

## STEP TWO Area Calculations

Most lawn areas are of basic shape or a combination of a number of basic shapes: rectangles, triangles and circles.

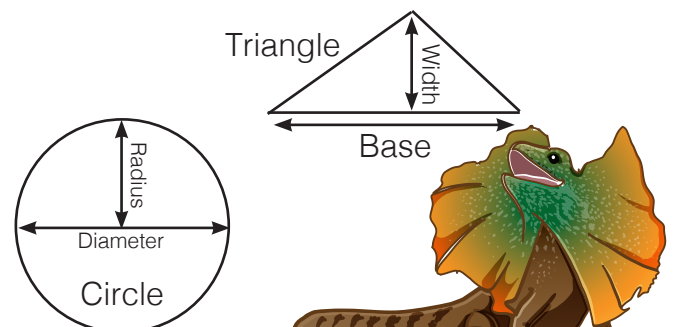
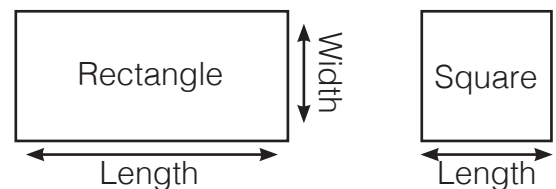
The area of a rectangle (or square) = Length x Width

For example: an area 10m long and 5m wide =  $10 \times 5 = 50\text{m}^2$  (square metres - not to be confused with metres squared which is technically  $50\text{m} \times 50\text{m}$  in this case)

The area of a triangle = Length x Width  $\div$  2

For example: a triangle with a base of 20m and a height of 5m =  $20 \times 5 \div 2 = 50\text{m}^2$

The area of a circle =  $\pi r^2$  or Radius x Radius x 3.14. The radius is half of the total distance from one side of the circle to the other (diameter) passing through the centre point.



# STEP THREE Materials

## Soils designed for growing and establishing your Lawn

Soils ain't soils! And that's a fact. Most people give very little considerations to the type of soil they are going to use to lay their new turf on or plant their seed in. You shouldn't simply scrape up what soil is left around a job site or roll out new turf on existing depleted soil and expect to see your new lawn thrive.

Old, existing or depleted soil contains little or no organic matter. In no time, poor soil with no organic component compacts and goes rock hard. Soil particles knit together and become tighter until there are no gaps for air or roots. Water and fertiliser can't penetrate to the root system so therefore your lawn is starved and will either struggle or even die.

A soil mix called Under Turf Soil from our ULTRA Grow range is the best option to grow a healthy green lawn. A mixture consisting of sandy loam, organic compost and mineral sand combine to provide the perfect growing media for turf. The organic component not only feeds your new turf but also allows the soil to stay friable and gives moisture holding capabilities. The mineral sand provides essential trace elements as well as long term drainage capabilities. The sandy loam provides the base structure which all soil both natural and man made are made from.

Sand based soils such as this coupled with deep less frequent watering encourages deeper and stronger root growth making for a more drought tolerant and lower maintenance lawn in the long term.

### Soil for Laying Turf

#### UltraGROW Under Turf Soil Mix

Under Turf as described above is the perfect choice for laying a new lawn using rolled turf. Add a lawn started fertiliser such as Organic Xtra or Sir Walter Launcher to provide a great base for your lawn to thrive.

Just remember, your lawn will need ongoing care and attention and a regular fertilising routine will ensure ongoing healthy growth.

### Volume Calculations

For both seeding and laying turf you'll need to spread a good layer of the soils mentioned above to a depth of at least 75-100mm. At this depth you'll need 1m<sup>3</sup> of soil to cover 10m<sup>2</sup> of area. It is difficult to be exact, but do your sums first and don't guess the measurements!

Example: 5m x 2m = 10m<sup>2</sup> at a depth of 100mm (0.1m) = 10m<sup>2</sup> x 0.1m = 1m<sup>3</sup>

#### Tools:

- Shovels
- Wheelbarrow
- Spirit Level
- Soil Spreader
- String Line
- Broom

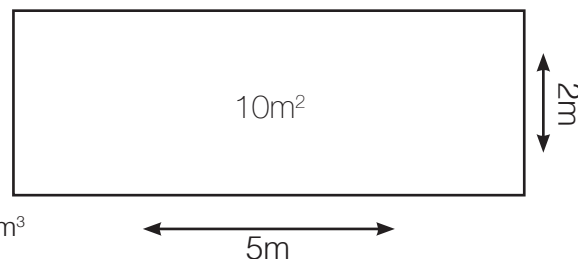
### Soil for Seeding

#### UltraGROW Special Blend

A blend that is a correctly proportioned mix of finely sieved sandy loam, composted sawdust, mineral sand and chicken manure. This is an excellent product that is ideal for top dressing, seeding lawns and a fine light garden soil.

#### A1 Top Dressing

A second alternative to Special Blend (our first recommendation). A similar mix with a more organic base making it lighter. Still an effective base for starting a lawn from seed.



- Hardwood pegs (to level and square the area)
- Rake
- Knife or shears
- Hose & sprinkler
- Carton of XXXX

### Should you seed or lay turf?

There's pro's and con's to both methods, but generally your choice comes down to a matter of cost and time. Seeding a lawn costs less than half the cost per square metre of turf but seeding is a temperamental exercise. It is subject to fungal attack, birds, water (washed away by rain), too much water or not enough, heat and sun. Usually it takes a few applications of seeding and over-sowing to achieve lasting and lush results. On the other hand, laying turf is a more costly exercise both on the hip pocket and the energy levels, but in an afternoon you can have a completed green lawn ready to go.

Another consideration is that many of the well-known turfs such as Sir Walter, Empire Zoysia and Aussie Blue Couch are only available in a ready to roll out turf and not seed.

# STEP Four A. Seeding

Peg out the area to be sown in strips. Read the seed packet instructions and calculate the quantity required. Put the seed in a bucket or spreader and cast the seed, first in one direction then at a right angle for even distribution. Lightly rake the soil and move onto the next strip. When all the lawn is sown, water with a spray or sprinkler and the surface now must be kept moist for the seed to germinate. It's a delicate balance, too much water and the seed will wash away and too little the seed will dry out and fail to germinate.

This process is best done very early spring when the night temperatures begin to warm, before the summer rains and scorching daytime temperatures.

It is best to have your turf delivered on the day you intend to lay it, so be sure to have all your preparation done ahead of time. Order a few days before you need it on-site. Allow around an hour to lay 50-75m<sup>2</sup>

# STEP Four B. Turfing

Here's a list of step by step instructions on how to lay turf and achieve excellent results!

1. You should remove any existing grass or weeds before the new turf is laid. The best weed killer for the job is RoundUp or Glyphosate which is a non-selective weed killer (meaning it will kill everything you spray it on, so apply carefully) which leaves no residue in the soil. Once dry, your new soil can be applied directly over the existing area (as the poison will continue to work under the new soil). Remember, you will need up to 100mm of organic soil for your new turf to thrive in, so you may need to excavate your area to accommodate the added height.

If your organic soil is laid onto a clay base, it is an excellent idea to apply Gypsum at the rate of about 150 grams per square metre. The gypsum is a natural clay breaker and it will allow the roots to penetrate deeper in the sub surface.

2. Spread out at least 75-100mm of UltraGROW Under Turf Soil Mix and level out with a rake or soil spreader.
3. Once satisfied with the levels, use a water filled roller to evenly and lightly compact the soil. You may need to add some extra soil here to fill in any low spots highlighted by this light compaction.
4. Sprinkle the area with a turf starter fertiliser such as Organic Xtra. We recommend using only organic based fertilisers at this stage as they are guaranteed not to burn. Overdosing chemical fertilisers runs the risk of root burn on fragile new turf. Lightly rake your fertiliser into the soil.
5. Give the whole area a light sprinkle with water to moisten the soil which helps to stop the new turf from drying out and activates the fertiliser.
6. Begin laying your turf starting at the bottom of a slope and working across the slope. Use full rolls or slabs (or the biggest pieces available) around the edges where possible.
7. Stagger the joints, a bit like brickwork, so they don't line up. This prevents drying out and soil erosion caused by heavy rain on sloping ground.

Butt the turf closely together, avoiding gaps as these can dry out, look ordinary, cause unevenness and will need to be filled in later using a top dressing soil.

8. Cut the turf, avoiding small pieces as these dry out quickly. Do not stretch the turf as you can damage the root system. Cut the turf with a knife or hedging shears. A forceful bunt with a shovel or spade can do the trick, but precision is required and collateral damage can occur, take care!
9. Water it in as soon as it's laid, In fact if you can have a sprinkler on the areas completed while you continue working even better. Alternatively, have a mate hand watering while you continue to lay on hot days. Hand watering is more accurate and gives a more even result with less waste. Water methodically, working in grids or rows.
10. Give your lawn a final roll with a water filled roller. This ensures great root contact and will help even out those bumpy spots.
11. Keep off your lawn for at least 2 weeks or until it is established. Too much traffic can cause damage to the root system and undulations in the soil. If on the nature strip, consider roping off the area with high visibility tape and setting up a temporary letterbox for your postman. Keep the heavy motorbike off your lawn for as long as possible.

12. Keep your lawn moist but not drowning in the establishment period which is usually around 2 weeks, but can be longer in the cooler months. Water at least twice a day and up to four times in extreme conditions. Water long enough for the sub-soil to remain moist. Remember, an hour of hand or sprinkler watering equates to around 1000 Litres. A lawn around 100m<sup>2</sup> will need at least 3-5mm of water morning and night while establishing which equates to around 20-30 minutes of watering. Hand watering is recommended as your coverage is thorough and systematic. A sprinkler, while easier is very uneven flooding some areas while only a few drops get to others. Don't forget about the edges that meet kerb and pavers, they dry out the fastest and need that extra bit of attention.

# STEP EIGHT Mowing

Staying on top of your lawn mowing routine is essential for the long term success of your lawn so it's important to get it right.

A healthy lawn, kept mowed, minimises the chance of weeds spreading by seed heads and germinating, but keeping a regular schedule prevents scalping and thinning.

## General Mowing Tips

- To keep lush and thick, avoid long periods between mows. Regular mowing is best usually once a week in spring and summer and once a fortnight in autumn and winter.
- Only remove one third of the leaf per mow, no more. If your lawn is overgrown you may need to gradually reduce it to the correct height over a few mows. Allowing your lawn to grow long between mows, shortens the actual green blade of grass and lengthens the brown or grey stalk. The next mow then exposes the lower stalk, and you're left with an unsightly, thin and struggling brown carpet.
- Don't mow too short, this puts your lawn under extreme stress and is an invitation for weed establishment. Lawns grown at their optimal height are far better equipped to shade out weeds and cope with drought conditions. Optimal length for couch grass and zoysia is between 20-40mm whereas buffalo is 30-50mm.
- Don't be fooled into thinking if you mow your lawn low you will need to mow less frequently. In most cases you will scalp your lawn and cause damage which will take months to recover.

Keep your mower blades sharp for a clean crisp cut, replace them every 2-3 years.

Make sure your mower wheels are running true and tight. Loose wheels cause an uneven mow.

# STEP NINE Fertilising

A regular fertilising schedule will help keep your lawn in peak condition; better equipped to deal with stress and diseases, to fight off weeds and be the envy of all your neighbours.

## General Fertilising Tips

- Before you lay your lawn, apply a starter fertiliser such as Organic Xtra. We recommend using only organic based fertilisers at this stage as they are guaranteed not to burn. Overdosing chemical fertilisers runs the risk of root burn on fragile new turf.
- The best time of year to apply fertiliser is when the grass is actively growing. In SEQ that is from around September through to the end of March. Once the soil temperature starts to drop below 20 degrees turf growth slows and you will get limited results.
- Fertilising in spring and autumn are especially important in the fertilising calendar as these are the times either side of the dormant winter period. In spring the fertiliser provides the nutrients for the seasonal growth and in autumn the fertilising provides nutrients that will help your lawn keep its colour for longer and give it the legs to get through the winter.
- Summer application helps maintain the right balance of nutrients for healthy growth.
- Use fertilisers such as Eco 88 for an instant green boost from the organic component and lasting food from the slow release component.

# STEP TEN Weed & Pest Control

It is always easier to deal with weeds and pests from the outset rather than trying to get a problem area back under control after times of neglect. So much like a regular fertilising regime, your weed and pest control needs an organised approach that is tended to regularly.

## General Weed & Pest Control Tips

- Many weed problems like Bindii, dandelion, clover, creeping oxalis can be handled through the use of selective weed control herbicides such as Amgrow Multi-Weed. They are broad spectrum and tend to take care of most general weeds found in the domestic lawn. Always check the label for specific directions as some species such as Buffalo require specific treatment.
- Weeds such as Nutgrass and Mullumbimby Couch should be treated using Semptra as soon as the problem arises.
- The main offenders when it comes to pests in the home lawn is army worm, white curl grub and african black beetle. Fortunately treatment of these pests is all very similar as is the signs of damage they cause. If you notice any problem areas where the grass is thin or browning, usually in growing patches you may need to treat.
- Chemicals like Imidacloprid, Chlorpyrifos and Bifenthrin are active constituents in a number of commercially available pest control products and are all effective in treating grub and beetle.
- Don't treat only once, treat as soon as you notice a problem following the package directions, again 7 days later and once more 4 days after that on the 11th day. (1-7-11)