

The Art of Soil Free Turfgrass Sod (Part 2)

This is the second of a two-piece series on soil free turfgrass sod. As mentioned in the [first article](#), fast root development without soil contamination is the driving factor behind the growing popularity of soil free turfgrass sod. Consequently, it is widely accepted as the standard for establishing turf on applications for USGA specification root zone materials, such as golf course greens and sports fields.

In the previous article, we explored the science and technology behind the product. In this article we will discuss the application and “required art” that makes the use of this advanced product successful.

Bare root comparison

Even before you get to the golf course, soil free turfgrass sod offers several benefits, namely that it is suitable for refrigerated transport and it is lightweight. These attributes make it available to golf courses anywhere in the country.

However there are a few precautions. Soil free turfgrass sod is similar to a bare root tree and has no way to survive for long periods of time without being installed on a fertile surface. Therefore, you have to work quickly upon delivery.

- * Install it as soon as possible, keeping it cool until ready to unroll, and
- * Once installed, provide water and nutrition as soon as possible.

Laying it out, install teams

When you start installing soil free turfgrass sod, you'll immediately notice that it is much more flexible than traditional sod, and conforms to the surface perfectly. Therefore, it is imperative to have a well-leveled surface. The turf will also conform to any impressions left by the installation team so use plywood sheets. These sheets can then be used to support rolling equipment to press the turf into the substrate material.

Lack of reserves

The plant has little in the way of reserves, so it is critical to provide water as soon as it is unrolled. The plants will wilt and dry quickly in direct sunlight, so it's also beneficial to syringe the rolls as they are laid out. Once the green is fully installed give it a significant watering to decrease the chance of the plant going into transplant shock.

Watering regime

The amount of water required by the turf is dependant on many factors, and it is difficult to recommend a timetable that will suit all locations and situations. However, in general the turfgrass should receive lots, almost excessive amounts of water in the first 12 hours following installation. This will lessen the shock of transplanting and make it easy for the turfgrass to reestablish some reserves. After the first 24 hours, and for the next 72 hours, the amount of water should be gradually reduced. This will allow the roots to begin their drive downwards into the soil surface to search for water. Failure to decrease the watering could create a plant that becomes lazy and waterlogged, which leaves it susceptible to disease.

Root mass development

A few days after installation, the roots will be initiated into the top three to four inches of the root zone mix. At this point, it's beneficial to use a broad-spectrum fungicide because the turfgrass sod is still under stress and will be susceptible to any pathogens in its new environment.

Bringing it down

Once you are happy with the depth of rooting that has been achieved, you can begin the process of lowering the height of cut on the green. It is important that the process of lowering the height of cut begins with a light topdressing application before each drop. By adding topdressing you are essentially bringing the “ground up” as the height of the grass blades is being reduced. This will help reduce the occurrence of scalping which will set both the grass and its rooting backwards if it is excessive.

In Play

The time to playability varies depending on your particular circumstances and the growing conditions, however you will be pleasantly surprised by how quickly soil free turfgrass sod roots. Compared to seeding or conventional sod, soil-free sod takes a much shorter time to get to a playable surface. Your greens can be playable within 30 days.

A number of prestigious golf courses have had great success with Manderley and our soil-free sod product. If you're interested in learning more, please read the first article, at http://www.manderley.com/pdf/soilfree_may_2007.pdf, or give us a call at 1-800-461-5501.



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