

Q: I need to redo my lawn. What is the process for a lawn renovation?

A: The first step you should take is to consider carefully why your old lawn has not thrived. Evaluate your soil, the amount of sunlight received, the drainage and weed competition. How much traffic does the lawn receive? What kind of irrigation system is in place? Often older lawns have soils that have become seriously compacted, invaded with competitive tree roots and shaded by large shrubs and trees. Choosing the right kind of turf for your existing conditions is important for the success of a new lawn.

The next step will be the removal of the existing lawn and all weeds. This can be done by non-chemically by solarizing the soil or chemically by using herbicides. It is necessary to remove all the competing grasses and weeds on the site prior to seeding or sodding a new lawn.. Once the old lawn has been removed, add soil amendments if required. Many of the soils in this area contain a large amount of clay, and the addition of composts will loosen the soil, improving water and air penetration. Add 5cm, (2") of compost and work that in by tilling or hand digging to a 5-8cm (2-4") depth. Add a starter fertilizer at the same time. Fertilizer rates are listed containers. It is not recommended that more than 1 pound of Nitrogen be added to 1000 sq. feet of lawn area. The three numbers on a fertilizer label indicate the percentages of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (in that order) in the formulation. For example, applying 20 pounds of a 5-10-5 fertilizer would contain 1 pound of nitrogen, 2 pounds of phosphorus, and 1 pound of potassium.

Once your soil is prepared, it is time consider irrigation. If you do not have a sprinkler system in place, you may want to think about installing one. Instructions for installing lawns systems are available at numerous web-sites and local hardware stores. If you are renovating an existing system, check the coverage carefully. Lawn sprinklers should have 'head-to-head' coverage, or 100% spray overlap. You may need to change sprinkler heads or add additional sprinklers in some situations. Water the site for several days prior to adding the turf. This will give you a chance to look for spots where water collects or for dry spots with inadequate coverage, and to correct the system.