



**SOTA**  
LANDSCAPING

**Seed Aftercare**

## **Watering Instructions**

Most sprinkler zones equipped with **rotor heads** (which emit a single rotating stream of water) can typically be set to run for 10–15 minutes. A good starting point is 10 minutes per zone, with adjustments made based on site conditions. Zones with **fixed spray heads** generally require only 2–3 minutes per cycle. If manually watering with **above ground sprinklers**, 10–15 minutes is generally an acceptable length of time per watering session.

Avoid overwatering, as excessive run times can lead to puddling and runoff, especially on sloped areas. While some minor puddling—particularly around sprinkler heads—is acceptable, the goal is to maintain moisture without saturating the area. Ideally, the lawn should remain firm enough to walk on between watering cycles.

If the surface dries out completely within five minutes of a zone shutting off, the application is likely insufficient. A balanced approach aims for about 50% to 65% of the surface to be dry just before the next scheduled watering cycle.

A typical initial watering schedule for seed germination is **four cycles per day**: 8:00 AM, 12:00 PM, 4:00 PM, and 8:00 PM.

This may need adjustment during hot, dry, or windy conditions by increasing run times or adding start times. Watering during nighttime hours is not recommended, as it promotes mold growth.

**Water 2–4 times per day**, ensuring the soil stays moist throughout the day. When the soil dries out, it slows or halts germination, reducing your chances of a successful lawn. The first 14 days after planting is the most critical period for seed germination.

Do not water in the late evening or after dark. Extended moisture at night promotes fungus and root rot.

Adjust for weather. During hot and windy conditions, increase watering, as dry wind can quickly dehydrate the soil.

Ensure no areas are missed during watering, especially edges and corners. Every part of the seedbed must stay evenly moist.

If **Hydroseed** was installed, it will darken when wet and lighten as it dries, similar to wet pavement. This visual cue helps monitor moisture levels.

As drying begins, small light-colored patches will appear and spread. This does not always mean watering is needed immediately, but if the hydroseed remains completely dry for extended periods, germination can be impaired.

### **Fertilizer**

For optimal results, apply a high-quality granular **starter fertilizer**—look for the word “*starter*” on the bag. Reputable sources include Menards, Fleet Farm, Home Depot, or local garden centers. While Scotts is a reliable national brand, any starter fertilizer formulated for turfgrass will suffice. Bags will list coverage in square feet; it’s best to apply fertilizer on the higher end of the recommended rate. Over-application of starter fertilizer rarely causes harm, but under-application is a common issue and can significantly hinder early growth.

**Follow-up fertilization is critical.** Without it, grass will grow slowly and fail to thicken as it should. Although there is no one-size-fits-all schedule due to differences in soil and growing conditions, the following timeline works well in most cases:

- **First follow-up application:** 3–4 weeks after hydroseeding. (Starter fertilizer added during hydroseeding is typically depleted after 28 days.)
- **Subsequent applications:** Every 3–4 weeks until the lawn is growing vigorously. In some cases, applications can be made every 2 weeks.
- **Soil type matters:** Light (sandy) soils usually require more frequent fertilization than heavy (clay) soils.

**Growth rate is your best indicator.** When mowing at a 3" height, you should be removing approximately 2" of growth every 7 days. If you're only cutting off ½", your lawn likely needs more fertilizer. In fast-growing conditions, mowing every 5 days may be necessary.

**Seasonal expectations:**

- Growth slows during cool weather (night temps in the 30s-40s) and in the peak of summer heat. Grass may go dormant in hot, dry stretches but will recover with cooler temperatures and rainfall.
- Fertilizing during July is fine, but avoid doing so in the middle of prolonged heat and drought.

**Turf color is a helpful indicator.** Healthy, well-fertilized turf will be dark green. Pale green or yellowing grass often signals under-fertilization. Signs to watch for:

- **Animal urine spots** that appear much greener and taller than surrounding turf indicate what properly fertilized grass should look like.
- **Striping patterns** with alternating light and dark green bands usually mean uneven fertilizer distribution—not fertilizer burn. Light areas received less fertilizer and need another application.

**Mowing**

Set your mower deck no lower than **3 inches**. If mowing at this height results in visible clippings, you're good to proceed. **Avoid bagging clippings**—mulching returns valuable nutrients to the soil and does **not** contribute to thatch buildup.

If clippings are left in noticeable piles after mowing, it may indicate one or more of the following:

- The mower blade is dull

- Mowing was delayed too long
- The grass was wet
- The mowing height is set too low

Maintaining a 3" mowing height helps promote healthier growth. Grass blades grow more slowly as they get farther from the plant base, so mowing at 2.5" will produce more clippings over time than mowing at 3". Keeping the grass slightly taller also improves drought tolerance and encourages deeper root development.

Never cut more than 2.5" of the grass blade off at a time. Doing so will cause the grass to starve for water and there is a high chance of killing your new turf if the lawn is scalped.

### **Weed Management During Establishment**

It's normal to see some weed growth during lawn establishment—don't be alarmed. Most fast-growing, upright weeds are not true turf weeds and typically cannot survive regular mowing at a 3-inch height every 7 days. The combination of mowing and competition from developing grass plants is usually enough to eliminate them naturally, without the need for herbicides.

A **broadleaf herbicide** may be applied 6–8 weeks after seeding if needed. However, post-emergent crabgrass control should not be used during the first growing season, as it can damage young turf.

**Crabgrass** is an annual weed that is not frost tolerant—similar to tomatoes or begonias. If some crabgrass emerges, there's no need to panic. These plants will naturally die off with the first frosts in late September. In contrast, turfgrass species are frost-tolerant perennials that thrive in cool weather and will continue to fill in and crowd out crabgrass as temperatures drop in the fall.