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For Immediate Release:

Avoiding New Lawn Failures

Hopes are high for a beautiful new lawn after you've spent the time, money and energy to plant that seed or lay the sod. But reality doesn't always deliver on that hope and what was a daydream becomes a nightmare.

What goes wrong for many homeowners?

The lawn's failure can usually be tied to one or more common mistakes homeowners make anywhere in the process...from selecting the grass to mowing and watering. To help people avoid future failures, use the following list of recommendations:

*** Select seed, sprigs/stolons or sod that are suited to the area and its use.** Tell a Master Gardener, garden center expert or turfgrass sod producer in your immediate vicinity how much shade your yard has, how you intend to use the yard (for example-light and casual use, or as a heavy play area), and how much time you want to devote to its maintenance. Not all grasses are up to every possible use.

Don't scrimp on costs when choosing your planting materials. A few dollars saved on seed or sod that is even slightly inferior will cost hundreds of dollars **and** hours more to remedy than if the correct choice was made before the project was even started.

*** Spend the time and money to properly prepare the soil before planting.** Sprinkling seed or laying sod on soil that has just been scuffed up with a rake is certain to result in failure. Take the time to have a soil test performed, add the recommended amendments and deeply till the soil. There is no better time to enhance a lawn's ultimate beauty and success than by improving the soil before any planting takes place. Once the grass begins to grow, it's practically impossible to significantly improve the soil beneath those little plants.

*** Select the season to optimize success and according to your own availability.** In most climates, fall is the best season to start a new lawn whether it's by seed or sod, but beyond that, there are no common "best times." Sod can be installed whenever it's available from a farm, (even if the ground is frozen), although it will require more water during peak summer heat. Seeding can be attempted in the

spring, but homeowners should keep in mind that whatever they do to encourage the grass to grow in the spring will also encourage weed growth. Summer seeding is not practical in most areas because of the extra water that would be needed due to increased heat and added turfgrass disease pressure.

For seeding, homeowners need to plan on watering two to three times a day for at least a month, and then less frequently for the next two to three months. Sodding will require frequent watering for at least a week and even longer during the summer. Missing even a day's watering at this critical time can totally eliminate all of the hard work that has gone into the project up to that point. Newly sprouted grass seed can die quickly.

*** Watering should be done infrequently and deeply** once the grass has established, to encourage deep roots that will have a larger reservoir of water available to it in times of drought or heat. Watering as early in the morning as possible is recommended because of the reduced evaporation and wind losses and reduced chances of disease outbreaks.

***Mowing should never remove more than the top third of the grass blade** with a sharp mower blade. Clippings can be left on the lawn because they will degrade and return nutrients to the grass and not create thatch. Changing mowing patterns each time will avoid scalping and rutting.

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