

## **Irrigating and fertilizing newly planted sod**

**Q.** I've recently renovated my lawn and placed several pallets of sod in my front yard. How long and how often should I irrigate this new sod until it is rooted? Also, when should I fertilize it?

**A.** When watering to establish a lawn, we normally call for two to three "mists" throughout the day for the first seven to ten days until roots become established. These are just ten minute bursts. Then back off to once a day for about ½ hour for seven to ten days. Then go to two to three times a week for about seven days. By then your lawn should be established. Of course, when we are getting adequate rainfall, the above is not necessary. Your goal during establishment is to keep the upper several inches of soil moist (not soggy wet and not allowed to dry out). Rain counts.

On fertilizing a new lawn, a good rule of thumb is to not fertilize until the grass has required mowing twice. Applying fertilizer too soon can burn (injure) the new tender roots.

Here is a UF/IFAS webpage with publications on establishing and renovating a Florida lawn. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPICLawnEstablishment>

**Q.** Is it okay to use pine straw as mulch in my vegetable garden or will it make my soil too acid?

**A.** Pine straw is okay to use as mulch in the vegetable garden. But I prefer to use it as mulch in my landscape plant beds. I do not prefer it as mulch in a vegetable garden. I like to use something such as hay straw that more quickly breaks down when worked into the garden soil. I don't use pine straw in my compost pile, either. It takes too long to breakdown. But I have used pine straw around vegetables and instead of working it into the soil after the vegetables are spent, I rake it out and use it elsewhere, such as a natural area under trees. As mulch, it should not significantly change the soil pH. But, if it were routinely incorporated into the soil as an amendment, it may lower the soil pH.

**Q.** I'm finding small black mounds in my yard. They look similar to potting soil.

**A.** The mounds may be earthworm casts. If so, they are beneficial – no need for control. To confirm this, mix up an ounce of liquid dishwashing soap in a gallon of water and pour over a two foot by two foot area where these mounds are, allow several minutes to soak into the ground and watch for earthworms to surface.

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