

# Hondalawnlovers

## Creating a healthy lawn



### CREATING A HEALTHY LAWN

Creating a healthy lawn all starts with the soil. If the soil under the turf is good, you will have a healthy lawn for many years. For optimum growth, turf grass needs the perfect balance of sunlight, air, water and nutrients to flourish. If there is too much or too less of any one, the lawn may not thrive or even still, survive. In the right proportions, the lawn will flourish.

Grass obtains three of these four vital ingredients (air, water and nutrients) from the soil, but many soils are less than ideal for growing grass. Some soils contain too much clay and may be very compacted, which is not ideal for grass. This is because air and water aren't available to the roots, and the roots cannot grow. Other soils may have too much sand, which doesn't allow water and nutrients to stay in the root zone long enough for the plant to absorb it. Another complexity with many soils is that their pH, or degree of acidity or alkalinity, is too high or too low for optimum grass growth. Ideally, you should have the existing soil tested by a soil scientist.

Apart from getting advice from a soil scientist, there are three basic methods that can be used to prepare the soil. Choosing the correct method depends on your budget and the condition of the soil to begin with.

Firstly, you should remove any existing grass or weeds with Glyphosate. The initial spray should eradicate most existing grass however, a follow up spray 2 months later is also recommended. Before the initial spray, make sure the weeds and unwanted grass is healthy. It is a great idea to water the grass and weeds a few times before spraying, to make sure it is well hydrated and growing well.

If you are fortunate enough to have good soil, use a tractor rotary hoe to loosen the soil bed to at least 100mm, and a maximum of 200mm. If the soil is too hard, water it well the night before. After rotary hoeing rake out any dead foliage if necessary, and level the ground. If you have soil that is in poor condition, mostly clay or sandy, use some organic soil conditioner. Use at least 2 cubic metres per 100 square metres. Spread this over the soil. Gypsum can be added to clay soil also. Use a rotary hoe to mix this well into the ground, and then rake the ground smooth.

The use of a skid steer is another method. If you prefer to get a contractor to do the preparation, this makes life easier.

Make sure the operator rips the existing soil well first, loosening the base. Then use 7 cubic metres of good quality organic soil blend per 100 square metres of ground. Make sure it has a decent amount of organics in it. Use the skid steer to spread this, making sure the finish is smooth. In some areas you may need to use a rake to smooth it out.

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Turf is the easiest, safest and best way to install a lawn. Seeding only works well in places like Tasmania where cool climate turf like Fescue is used. For warmer climates, it is best to use turf like Buffalo where no seed is available. It is difficult to get good results from Couch and Kikuyu, because their seeds germinate very slowly.

Simply lay one roll around the outside and then fill in the area with the turf all going one way. Patch up any gaps, roll the lawn if you can, and water it well. On hot days, water the turf in sections as you lay it. Don't fertilise till a month after the turf is laid. University research proves that turf receives no benefit from fertiliser until a month after laying. Then use a good slow release type.

For the first two weeks the lawn cannot dry out. On a hot day in summer, that may mean watering three times per day, or on a milder day, once per day. After two weeks, watering can often be reduced to every 2nd or 3rd day.