CARE MANUAL
JIM MELKA LANDSCAPING & GARDEN CENTER

YOUR GUIDE FOR A LONG LASTING & BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE

WE APPRECIATE YOUR BUSINESS!
EMAIL QUESTIONS TO SERVICES@JIMMELKA.COM
Also, scan the QR code to visit the Resources page of our website for more landscape information.
www.jimmelkalandscaping.com/resources
CARING FOR NEW & EXISTING SOD

WATERING:

Watering is the most important step of the sod care process. Turfgrass is very demanding of water whether it is new or established. Watering new sod is essential to initiate root development, however existing turf still requires a minimum of 1” of water per week from March-October to stay dark green and healthy. Watering times vary depending on the time of the year and temperature. During the hottest part of the summer (June-August), turf needs to be watered more than 1” of water per week. If in doubt, water your lawn!

- Water turf in the morning hours to prevent disease.
- If using a sprinkler system, check your emitters regularly for proper coverage or leaks.
- If watering with a hose, soaker hoses work great.
- When watering new sod, make sure to give the edges extra water as they dry out the fastest.
- Watering can be skipped during significant rain events for established turf.

*Immediately after sod is laid, water each section as follows*

- Three times/day for the first 4 days for 20-30 min/section
- Two times/day for the next 3 days for 20-30 min/section
- One time/day for 2 weeks after for 20-30 min/section
- Every other day for 2 weeks after for 20-30 min/section

MOWING:

- Begin a mowing schedule approximately 2-3 weeks after installation; test the sod first by pulling the leaf blades to see if the roots are established. DO NOT MOW UNTIL YOU CANNOT PULL THE SOD UP.
- Never mow when grass is wet.
- Make sure mower blades are sharp.
- Set mower height to highest setting and mow for the first time.
- Cut the entire area whether it needs it or not.
- Water lawn immediately after first cutting.
- Remember to never remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade at one cutting.
- Begin mowing once a week if necessary (once a week in spring/fall; every 2-3 weeks in summer)
FOOT TRAFFIC:

- Stay off new sod for 2-3 weeks after installation
- Heavy foot traffic should be avoided, except for checking sprinklers
- Play activities by children & adults should be avoided
- No pet activity

FERTILIZING:

- A granular lawn fertilizer should be applied before and 4 weeks after installation.
- We recommend using the **Andersons Professional Grade 4-step Lawn Fertilizer Program**, which can be purchased anytime at our Garden Center.
- **Andersons Grub Control** and **Andersons Prophesy** should be applied in June to prevent grub damage and fungal growth throughout the year.
- Visit the Resources page of our website to download details for this program [www.jimmelkalandscaping.com/Resources/](http://www.jimmelkalandscaping.com/Resources/)
- Key fertilizer application dates are **Step 1**-Easter, **Step 2**-Memorial Day, **Step 3**-Labor Day, and **Step 4**-Halloween.

CARING FOR NEW GRASS SEED

Many factors affect seed germination, but especially temperature, moisture, and weed competition. Seeding can be done in both Spring or Fall, however the most optimum time is in the Fall when temperatures are mild, moisture is frequent, and weed pressure is low. Follow these important steps to ensure successful germination of your grass seed.

WATERING:

- Water is the key factor to establishing seed.
- Be careful not to over water seed as over watering will induce disease, you should never see any large puddles in the lawn.
- Under watering is also bad, you should never see any cracking in the soil, keep moist at all times.
- The goal for watering is to keep the seed moist, not wet.
- Allow the soil around the seed to dry in between waterings.
- Water each section for approximately 5 minutes, twice a day for the first 2 weeks and 3-4 days a week for 2 more weeks with a broad, misting fashion.
- Slowly reduce the amount of water over several weeks, you want to train the roots to search deeper for the water that is naturally in the soil, which will strengthen & help the new seed
adapt to more normal conditions.

**MOWING:**

- When the grass is about 2” tall you can begin weekly mowing.

**TRAFFIC:**

- Avoid walking on the newly seeded lawn until you begin mowing.

**FERTILIZING:**

- Weed control and fertilization can begin after your first mowing.
- Be careful with fertilizing new seed, you do not want to burn it.
- Mixing some compost or peat moss into the soil before you seed is a great fertilizer for the first few months.
- The first year we recommend using ½ the manufacturers suggested rate of granular fertilizer for established turf.
- The following year you may fertilize with the Andersons 4 step program as recommended for sod.

**CARING FOR YOUR TREES, SHRUBS & PERENNIALS**

- Topdress with hardwood mulch 1-2” below the trunk flare.
- Mulch helps the soil retain moisture. However, too much mulch can be detrimental to a tree’s health.
- NEVER MOUND MULCH OVER THE TREE TRUNK.
- Always water plants **directly at the base** or inside the container, never on the leaves (water at a medium pressure).
- Allow the plant rootball to dry before the next watering; skip watering after rain events of at least 1”.
- Always water plants/sod in the **morning** to prevent fungal growth.
- Install a **watering bag** around all newly planted trees.
- Check all plant material **every other day** in the Summer for water.
- Water new plants with a **water soluble fertilizer** every 2-3 weeks for the first 2 months after planting.
Average Watering Times For New Plants (1-3 years established)

HOT MONTHS (above 80 degrees)
TREES & EVERGREEN TREES: 2-3 minutes
SHRUBS & SMALL EVERGREENS: 30-40 seconds
PERENNIALS: 15-20 seconds
GROUNDCOVERS: 15 seconds

COOL MONTHS (below 80 degrees)
TREES & EVERGREEN TREES: 1-2 minutes
SHRUBS & SMALL EVERGREENS: 20-30 seconds
PERENNIALS: 10-15 seconds
GROUNDCOVERS: 10 seconds

*Water all new plants every day for the first week, every other day for the next week, every 2-3 days for 2 more weeks and every 3-4 days per week for the remainder of the season.*

TIPS TO REMEMBER WHEN WATERING:

- Never allow trees to be watered by lawn sprinklers, they should only be watered by hand.
- Move sprinkler heads as necessary if they are pointed at new trees in the lawn because they can become overwatered.
- Plants near house foundations, under eaves, and/or in southern, southwestern, or western exposures will have to be watered more frequently. They may get little water from precipitation, and reflected heat from walls leads to increased water and heat stress.
- Keep in mind that mounds, berms and slopes with plants usually have much more soil surface exposed and cause water to run off which in turn makes plants more prone to drying out quicker. Check and water these areas more frequently.
- Be careful not to over water, it can be just as harmful as under watering. However, extremely hot summers can lead to plant death if underwatering occurs.
- Follow the watering durations above for 1-3 years. Beyond 3 years, the watering durations can be doubled.
- Never water plants on the foliage and try to water in the morning vs the evening to prevent fungal growth.

*PLANTS TO KEEP ESPECIALLY MOIST IN THE SUMMER:
- SPIREA
- VIBURNUM
- HYDRANGEA
- SWEETSPIRE
• RIVER BIRCH

*BE CAREFUL NOT TO OVERWATER IN THE SPRING & FALL:
• BURNING BUSH
• BARBERRY
• ARBORVITAE
• JUNIPER
• SPRUCE

FERTILIZING:

We recommend fertilizing all plants once every 2-3 weeks during the months of April and May with **Miracle-Gro (a water soluble fertilizer)** or Anderson's Brand **12-16-6 Granular** Fertilizer. Granular fertilizer is time-released and only needs to be applied every 2 months. Some plants such as Rhododendron and Hydrangea will benefit from a more acidic soil; **Miracid** can be used on these plants and can be found at [Melka Garden Center](http://www.melkagardencenter.com).

Fertilizer should not be applied after October 1st because landscape type plants need time to slow down their growth and acclimate before winter. Applying fertilizer in the fall encourages new growth just before winter and does not give the new growth time to harden before the frost, which often will result in frost damage to the new growth.

PRUNING:

All shrubs & evergreens were pruned when your landscaping was installed by Jim Melka Landscaping. Any additional pruning for shape and size can be done as needed. Pruning is done for many reasons such as to remove dead or damaged wood, to train the plant to a desired shape or size, and to even out branches that may have grown faster than others. Be sure to prune your spring flowering items after they are done flowering (late summer or fall). For example:

• Crabapples
• Forsythias
• Lilacs
• Viburnums
• Rose of Sharon
• Weigelas
• Magnolia

Other Plants should be pruned in the early spring time to remove winter wood and stimulate new growth (typically 12-18” from the ground is sufficient). For example:
• Ornamental Grasses
• Annabelle, Twist & Shout, Endless Summer, and Quick Fire Hydrangeas
• Spireas
• Little Henry Sweetspire
• Dogwood
• Knockout Roses

*Evergreens Hedges, Burning Bush, and other large shrubs can be pruned in Spring and Fall to maintain their shape*

*Try not to use pruning sealers on trees, it is better for the plant to heal naturally.*

*A good rule of thumb to remember when you are pruning is not to cut off more than 1/3 of the plant per year.

**INSECTS & DISEASES:**

Use **Bayer Tree and Shrub Insect Control** to deter a wide range of insects from infesting your trees and shrubs. Temporarily move any mulch away from the base of the plant, mix the chemical in water as directed, and pour around the plant. Use **Bayer Disease Control** in the early spring to prevent Rust, Black Spot, and other fungal diseases from infecting your trees, shrubs, and roses. Mix in a spray bottle and apply to newly emerging leaves at the directed rate. Ask the friendly Melka Garden Center Staff for help with any pest control needs.

**WINTERIZATION:**

• Plants should be mulched before the ground freezes to protect roots and hold more moisture in throughout the winter.
• Most perennials will be trimmed back to about 2”. Some perennials have winter interest and can be left up until early spring, cut back when you see new growth emerge.
• A deep soaking of trees and shrubs before the first frost will insulate and help keep moisture in the plants throughout the winter.
• Tree wraps will protect maples in the winter from frost cracking and deer damage.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS DON’T HESITATE TO CONTACT US! FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SEASON LONG LANDSCAPE TIPS & HELPFUL IDEAS!