

How to prepare the ground

After removing all stones and other rubbish from the lawn area, you must prepare the ground. This, too, is very important. Although it means hard work and physical exercise, the basic fact of life is that the better you prepare the seedbed, the better your lawn will be. It is best to dig the area over as deep as you can; there really is no substitute for this. Good drainage is important and deep digging will help.

Whilst digging, this is the time to get your soil structure right. If the soil is heavy, or clay-like, then work in plenty of peat and sharp sand. Also, if you can get some good loamy topsoil this too will help to break up the heavy texture.

If, on the other hand, the soil is light or sandy, work in a good amount of peat to give body to the soil and prevent drying out and loss of nutrients.

Also, at this stage, any leveling or sloping should be done, although you should take care not to take too much topsoil from any one area. Sub-soil does not make for a good seedbed; it is low in nutrients and will give variations in growing habit and colour.

The initial digging of the ground should be done in the autumn and the soil left 'as dug' in as large lumps as possible over the winter. This will enable rain and frost to break down the soil and make it crumbly and much easier to work down to a fine seedbed. In the spring, when the soil is starting to dry out, you can then make the seedbed ready. Either roll or rake the ground to break the soil down or, as many will recommend, tread it down and then rake it. On some soils, using a roller can cause compaction of the soil and undo some of the benefits of all your hard digging the previous autumn. If you tread the soil down, first go one way across the area, (e.g. north to south), then rake it over, then tread the other way, e.g. east to west), then rake again. Keep doing this until you have a firm, level seedbed.

One point to remember is that it is essential to get a level surface. A lawn that has bumps and hollows does not look anything like one that is level. One idea is to get a plank about 2 metres (6.5 feet) long, put some weights on it -such as a few bricks- attach a rope to each end, then pull it behind you, round and round the area, until you are happy that it is level.

Finally, a few days before you sow the seed a pre-seeding fertiliser such as 'Gromore' should be raked into the soil. This will stimulate root growth and provide the essential early feed to get the lawn off to a good start.