



Lawn Removal Guidelines

The following information is without guarantee of any kind. You are urged to look up your own resources (many are available on the internet) to ensure the method you use is the best for you and your landscape.

There are four basic approaches to removing grass (also called turf, sod or lawn):

1. **Mechanical.** Hacking, digging, sod cutting and other mechanical methods of mass lawn destruction.
2. **Sheet Mulching.** Layer newspapers, cardboard or other light-occlusive material covered by wood chip mulch on the area of the lawn targeted for removal. This is usually done over winter but can be done anytime. This reduces the chance of the lawn re-sprouting.
3. **Hire Someone to Remove the Lawn.** This is the easiest way to remove a lawn, but you still need to ensure it is done in a way that produces the least harm to the other plants and trees and leaves you with soil that is free of seeds and grass.
4. **Herbicides.** Pre-emergent (kill sprouting seeds), post-emergent (kill grass plants), nonselective (glyphosate-RoundUp), and herbicides that target *Poa* grass species should only be used if all other means of removal fail. See page 3 for details.



Lawn Removal Considerations:

1. **Watering.** Eliminate all irrigation for a period of 4 – 6 weeks allowing time for the grass to die off.
2. **3-Days Before Removal.** Water the area three days prior to removing the lawn to make the soil easier to work with. The soil should be moist but not soggy. This job will turn into a muddy mess if wet or be a much more difficult task if the soil is bone-dry.
3. **Mechanical Removal.**
 - a. If using a sod cutting machine or flat edge spade, then pull back the lawn while severing the roots of the grass just below the soil line.
 - b. Cut the lawn into parallel strips using an edger or sharp spade (with square edges). Be sure to keep the size of these strips small (approximately 1 foot wide by 2 feet long), otherwise they will be difficult to move.
 - c. Mechanical methods can be hard on a gardener's body. Avoid doing too much the first day until you see how your body reacts to the physically demanding work.
4. **Avoiding Harm When Using Herbicide.**
 - a. Review the University of California Pesticide Notes (attached) before working with any chemical herbicides or pesticides.
 - b. When herbicides and other chemicals are used, safety measures must be taken to ensure the applicator is not exposed to the chemical and secondary exposure from the applicator's clothing, shoes and tools is not transferred to others.
 - c. It is illegal for any chemical or irrigation water to runoff of a property into another property or the public-right-of-way.
 - d. Herbicides can kill other plants and/or trees.
 - i. If using glyphosate (RoundUp), apply during sunny days without wind. Glyphosate is active by sunlight and is not effective in shade. It can take 10-days to kill plants.
 - ii. With any herbicide, protect non-target plants with barriers, such as a large sheet of cardboard.
 - iii. Pre-emergent herbicides will kill all sprouting seeds. Avoid using them where seeds will be planted.
 - iv. Wear protective clothing, safety goggles and a respirator mask that covers mouth and nose.

- v. When finished, thoroughly clean all equipment and clothing shoes. Do not wear contaminated clothing into the house or pick-up children or pets while wearing contaminated clothing.
- 5. Storage/Disposal of Lawn.** Store the removed lawn on ¾ inch plywood or a tarp. Do not store on unprotected ground. Dispose of in the City provided green bin or in a truck to be hauled off to the solid waste collection center.
- 6. Care for Trees.** Removing lawn from underneath trees or around other plants can cause irreparable damage if done improperly.
- a. **Watering.** Trees that have been growing in a lawn have become accustomed to consistent and shallow watering. The majority of their roots will be in the top 4 to 6 inches of topsoil. You will need to provide consistent watering to young trees until they are established at about 3 to 4 years. You might consider speaking to an arborist about the watering needs of mature trees.
 - b. **Excavation around trees.**
 - i. If you have any concerns, consult an arborist before excavating around trees.
 - ii. Avoid disturbing the roots, especially in the critical root zone.
 - iii. No roots less than 2 inches should be cut.
 - iv. Excavation under the dripline, should be done manually with hand tools, an Air Spade or by washing the soil away (no runoff allowed). This will reduce the risk of breakage or injury.
 - v. Do not excavate or make a trench within a 1 foot of the tree.
 - vi. If roots become exposed, redirect them into the backfill areas if possible.
 - vii. Keep exposed roots moist by temporarily covering with earth or pack with peat moss and wrap with burlap until they are permanently relocated and covered with soil.
- 7. Topsoil.** Shake off any excess topsoil and reuse. You may need to add more.
- 8. Amendments.** You may need to add amendments (compost, iron, gypsum, etc.) to your soil to help plants get the nutrients they need. A soil analysis is a cost-effective way to know what's in your soil, which plants will work best in the soil in your yard, and the amendments you need.
- 9. Organic Material.** Any exposed soil remaining after planting will need to be covered with organic material such as mulch.

Warning on the Use of Chemicals

Herbicides and Pesticides are poisonous. Always read and carefully follow all precautions and safety recommendations given on the container label.

- Store all chemicals in the original labeled containers in a locked shed, away from food or feeds and out of reach of children, unauthorized persons, and pets.
- Consult the label to determine active ingredients and signal words.
- Chemicals applied in your home and/or landscape can move and contaminate the Santa Monica Bay.
- Prevent any runoff from the property onto neighboring properties and the public-right-of-way.
- Prevent any drift from entering neighboring properties, especially gardens containing fruits or vegetables.
- Do not put herbicide or pesticide containers in the trash or pour down the sink, toilet or gutters.
- For used or unwanted chemicals, schedule a pick-up:
1-800-449-7587 or email atyourdoor@wm.com
visit www.sustainable-sm.org for list of acceptable items.

Resources:

City of Santa Monica Office of Sustainability and the Environment
www.sustainable-sm.org

University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program
www.ipm.ucdavis.edu