

Welcome to your
New Build Home

Garden Maintenance Guide

Hints and guidance to help you get the most of
your freshly laid lawn and garden.

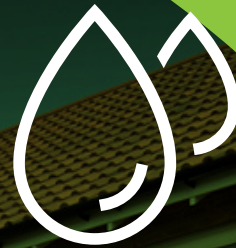


platform
housing group

This guide will help you understand what to expect and what care you need to give your lawn in order for your garden to thrive through its first season and beyond.

This information is provided as a guide.

The most important point to remember is that your new turf lawn is a mass of plants that need the correct balance of water, sunlight, food and care to survive. Your lawn will be susceptible to attacks by pests and diseases, but a good maintenance regime will help reduce this threat and allow your lawn to thrive all year round.



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After your lawn is laid

Your new lawn will require extra care and attention for a period after it has been laid.

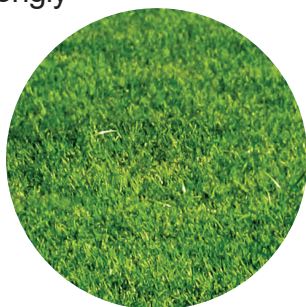
We recommend that you avoid walking on newly laid grass for at least two weeks if you move into your new property between April and September.

If you move in between October and March we recommend you avoid walking on your newly laid lawn for four weeks.

This gives grass time to root & avoids any damage.

Your garden will have been compacted during construction and the level of firmness will depend on many things like the length of time between applying top soil and turf, the depth of top soil, local soil types and weather conditions.

Soil will settle in time, but this may take several months. If there is a need to walk on your lawn within the first month we strongly recommend you useboards (e.g. scaffolding boards) to spread your weight to minimise making any dents especially when watering.



Watering

Watering your new turf correctly is the single most important step to growing a successful lawn. Overwatering/underwatering can cause long lasting damage.

Gaps that appear between individual rolls of turf is a sure sign that there has been insufficient watering whilst the turf is 'bedding in'.

If this happens you need to take the following steps to water your lawn:

Apply water

We recommend a hosepipe and sprinkler so watering is even.

How much water?

You need to make sure the water gets to the turf roots.

A good way of checking water has reached the roots, is to lift the corner of the turf roll and check that the ground below is moist.

Remember it is the roots that require the water, not the grass blades. Rainwater will not be enough, even in the wetter seasons.

How Often?

Twice daily for the first two weeks until the lawn becomes firmly rooted. Make sure the whole lawn is thoroughly watered, paying particular attention to the edges as this is the area which shrinks first during the drought.

In hotter summer months, the best time to water is early morning and again in the evening. As a general guide, turf laid between May and September will need watering twice daily for a least the first two weeks, then once a day for a week. This can be reduced as the roots take hold.

During very hot periods, your lawn may need watering three times per day. It is very important to continue watering even when it has rained. Gaps appearing between individual turf pieces and yellow/browning of the grass is a sign of insufficient watering, not that something is wrong with the turf.

Can I over water?

People often complain about dead grass following prolonged flooding. This is outside Platform's control.

Should this happens, brush the excess water away or wait for it to drain naturally and then insert drainage holes using a garden fork.



Mowing

Regular mowing is the most important part of lawn maintenance and must be done before the grass gets too long.

The maximum height should not exceed 50mm/2 inches. Extra care must be taken when cutting your turf in the first few months.

First cut

Mowing can only begin once the newly laid turf is firmly rooted into the soil. This is typically four weeks after being laid. Mowing puts stress on your lawn so only mow when the grass is dry and the ground is firm. Mow the lawn once the grass reaches over 40mm/1.5 inches in length and set your mower to the highest setting.

Please ensure that the mower blades are sharp and never remove more than one third of the grass length at any one time.

Further mows

Frequent mowing will stimulate growth and encourage new shoots. Try to mow your lawn in several directions and as frequently as you can. Remember to remove the clippings! If they are left they will smother other shoots and build-up may lead to lawn disease.

Please remember to reduce the height of the grass bit by bit each time you mow, reducing to a minimum of 25mm/1 inch. Do not mow the turf too low as root development will be restricted – especially in the first few months.

How often

Peak grass growth is between spring and autumn and a weekly mow is recommended as a guide, although this will depend on the time of year your turf was laid. In winter, mow if there has been a spell of mild weather that has stimulated grass to growth.

We recommend you only mow when the grass is dry, however if the weather is continually wet mow to prevent the grass becoming too high.

Dogs and other pets - Avoid letting your pets on the newly laid turf for at least a couple of weeks until it has rooted.

Dog urine can kill grass, leaving dead patches and bare spots.

Feeding

Your lawn will benefit from application of a slow-release fertiliser. Feed your lawn between March and October and apply evenly according to manufacturer's instructions. Apply the feed before light rain is expected and never during a dry spell. If there is no rainfall within 48 hours of applying fertiliser, please make sure the lawn is well watered.

Top Dressing

This is horticultural sand mixed with silt, clay, loam and grass seed. It's a great way to repair any wear/tear and undulations that may have occurred during the winter or summer months. The most favourable time for top-dressing and rolling lawns is April to June and August to September.

Toadstools

These grow naturally in both new and well established turf from spores found in the soil and appear particularly during warm and wet weather. They do not damage the lawn and can be removed by frequent mowing.

Leatherjackets

These are larvae of the Crane Fly (Daddy Longlegs) and the adult lays eggs in grassy areas between July and September.

Eggs hatch two to three weeks after laying and the larvae (Leatherjackets) live in the soil feeding on the roots in mild, damp conditions from autumn to late spring.

This causes patches of turf die back and birds will peck at the turf to get at the larvae. Aerating (or spiking) the lawn will improve drainage which will help prevent infestation.

Regular maintenance/feeding will also help the grass remain strong which assists in repelling possible infestations.

Please remember - Front gardens that have no fencing (including larger lawns) cannot be fenced off without permission.

If you wish to do this you will need to seek permission from both the Local Authority and from Platform and as such permission cannot be guaranteed.

Your monthly lawn care calendar - once your lawn is established



January

Generally a quiet month for lawn maintenance.

Remove dead leaves and avoid excessive walking on frosted and sodden lawns.

February

Sweep leaves and remove any worm casts when it's dry enough.

March

In dry weather, rake the lawn to clear debris and moss. A light rolling will also help firm up the ground after winter frosts.

March should be the first opportunity to mow but don't remove more than third of grass blade length at this time.

Avoid mowing low as it will turn your lawn an unsightly white or yellow. March is also a good month to look at lawn edges and repair any damaged areas. A half moon edging tool is ideal to neaten the edges.

April

When it gets warmer and the grass start growing, feed with nitrogen fertiliser and weed the lawn. Use a moss killer if needed and rake out all the dead moss two weeks after application.

Keep the lawn cut to 50mm/ two inches high, and remember not to remove more than a third of the grass blade length, in case there is a late frost.

May

It's mowing time! Mowing once a week is generally needed now and gradually reduce lawn height. In dry spells, spot-treat any weed problems.

June

Mowing twice a week may be needed now depending on the weather; this will also help thicken the lawn.

Rake lightly before mowing to raise any trailing stems. Use long handled shears to keep the edges neat. Lawn-feed will help keep your lawn lush and green. Keep an eye out for weeds and either pull out or spray as needed.

July

If the weather is too dry, raise the height of your mower blades.

You could also water the grass early mornings or evenings, especially in long periods of dry weather.

If the ground is baked, spike the lawn to allow water to soak in.

Always keep a check on the edges for trimming and weeds.

August

Apply high nitrogen fertiliser to help growth.

Reduce the height of the lawn gradually, just like at the beginning of the season (otherwise you will damage the grass).

September

This is the most important month for lawn care. Allow the height of the lawn to increase by 25% and only mow to how fast the grass is growing.

Scarify the lawn to get rid of debris and thatch – this will encourage side shoots and avoid thickening. Top-dressing will help give you greener grass and you can roll out any small lumps and bumps. Don't forget to weed and feed.

October

Reduce the number of times you mow the lawn and allow the height of the grass to rise ready for the winter.

Weed and feed the lawn, remove all leaves as this will help prevent the grass from growing and reduce worm activity over the winter.

November

The last mow should be done half an inch above your summer mowing level.

All leaves should be raked and cleared.

Try not to walk on the lawn if there is a frost or snow, or if the ground is waterlogged.

December

A final sweep of the leaves to tidy the garden.

For more information or if you are unsure about anything, ask at your local garden centre or contact a local landscaping or horticultural company.



Maintaining newly planted trees and shrubs

These guidelines will help your new shrubs and plants establish successfully.

Watering

Your new trees and shrubs need to root and settle themselves as quickly as possible, especially during the hot summer months. Correct watering is the only way to make sure this happens.

We recommend:

- 1 After initial tree/shrub planting, thoroughly soak the rootball.
- 2 Check the plant every day and water as needed at the base of the plant, making sure that the soil is moist. Never allow the soil to become dry as this leads to wilting, loss of leaf and eventual death. It's best to water early morning or evening during Spring/Summer, and make sure the plant is thoroughly soaked. Don't rely on rain for watering as it only penetrates a few inches into the soil.
- 3 If you can, always arrange for a friend or neighbour to continue watering when you go away, even if it's for a short time. Automatic systems are available and may make this job easier.
- 4 If a newly planted tree on your property has a girth of over 20cm, it will need to be watered in dry weather through the second year to ensure survival.
- 5 Wilting is the most obvious sign of under watering, whereas signs of over watering include yellowing/spotted leaves and rapid leaf drop.

Weeding

Keep beds free of weeds as they will compete with trees and plants for water which can affect their growth. Applying crushed bark or leaf mulch will help reduce weed growth and help retain moisture.

Decorative shrubs

Please note: some shrubs such as Bay Tree Cordylines, Phomiums Hebes, Palms, Camelia, and Phittosporum are only frost hardy to -5 degrees. We recommend wrapping them in horticultural fleece during extremely cold weather.

If your trees have been provided by Platform they will be staked and tied. Please check these intermittently for signs of chafing/tightening as the tree grows and make any necessary adjustments.

Landscaping, trees and shrubs are often approved by the Local Authority at Planning Approval stage. Removing trees and shrubs is usually prohibited for the first 5 years.



Your questions answered

Why I need to look after my Garden?

Looking after your garden is part of your Tenancy Agreement or is part of your Lease Agreement as a shared owner.

My lawn dips and is uneven. What do I do?

On new build properties, where there is made-up ground and freshly spread topsoil some ground settlement is inevitable and unavoidable. Simply mix sand and fine topsoil to create a top-dressing, fill the dips, and over-seed. Use a garden roller to level the garden up.

My lawn has cracks in it. What do I do?

In a prolonged drought period, some cracking may appear, simply fill in the cracks with a soil/sand mix and over-seed and water thoroughly.

My lawn has gaps forming between sections of turf and is discoloured. What is this?

This is caused by a lack of water - the turf is drying out and shrinking. If you catch this early enough, watering will cause the turf to expand and close the gaps and bring back the green colour. If they don't expand, fill in gaps with topsoil/sand mix and seed and water thoroughly.

My turf is dying against the wall or fence. What do I do?

This could be due to a lack of moisture and light so in this case you should consider changing the edging to a gravel border or shrub border with shade/drought-tolerant plants.

In some instances, however, it could be that there is more moisture in these areas so shrubs/plants that prefer more moisture are recommended.

Some areas hold up the water longer than others. What do I do?

As your new turf and subsoil/topsoil settles you can use a garden fork to help to drain the garden quicker and speed up the settling process. This will allow water to reach deeper into the ground and the root system.

Could I create Flower bed/or Vegetable patch?

You may install a flower bed in your garden should you wish to.

A vegetable patch is allowed in the rear garden, but should be in the form of a raised bed and we strongly recommend the use of vegetable top soil to support growth.

My garden is holding water after heavy rain in the summer. What should I do?

If your garden holds water after a heavy rain in the summer it is likely due to flash flooding - dry, parched, ground doesn't let water drain away as effectively as already moist ground. The ground has become compacted because moisture has evaporated away. This causes the soil particles to repel water as surface tension stops the water from falling through microscopic gaps in the soil. This then causes water to pool on the surface or run off down slopes. You will need to wait for water to drain over the time.

My fence post has moved/bent. What do I do?

The fencing has been put up in freshly made up ground and is therefore prone to settlement and movement over time. As long as your garden gates are not affected, we would not consider this as an issue.

My timber fence panels are different colours. What do I do?

Timber is a natural product and some panels may be a different colour due to different batches.

Should this be the case we would advise you to use timber care products and paint the fence to achieve a uniform look.

My timber fence panels/post/rails are warped/bent. What should I do?

Timber is a natural product and is susceptible to changes in moisture levels and temperature and therefore may bend, warp or split.

We do allow gap tolerances of up to 25mm so any changes do not necessarily mean that the products are defective.

We allow for a timber rail to bend/sag up to 50mm over 3 metres length. If on inspection we feel that the structure will fail within 10 years we may decide to change timber.

Please note that if you live in Rented Accommodation you must check who is responsible for repairing fencing & gates with Platform.

If you are Shared Owner, it is your responsibility to repair your fencing after the defect period has expired should your conveyance plan show this.

My garden gate is twisted/dropped. What do I do?

Timber is a natural product and is susceptible to changes in temperature and humidity. This can sometimes lead to warping and may stop the gate from opening and shutting easily. Should this happen we recommend that repositioning the ironmongery may help the situation.

Hooks or a latch can be added to the gate to stop it slamming shut in high winds. The Ironmongery you fit must be strong enough to support the features.

The drain cover in my garden sit higher than the level of the lawn. What should I do?

This is likely to occur when a freshly built up garden settles and soil particles compact over time. Simply mix sand and fine topsoil to create a top-dressing, fill around the drain, feather it out to match your lawn level, over-seed and water.

We would expect you to deal with this, however if you have concerns please contact us.

My garden grass is patchy or dying. What do I do?

If you have pets such as dogs, they may damage or have a detrimental effect on your lawn.

To recover or maintain your great lawn look, you may need to restrict access for your pets.

What's your approach to garden paths and slabs and sheds?

We do provide a slabbed access path to the front and rear door. The path width may vary from 600mm to 900mm (and occasionally over) depending on the site location and specification. These slabs are laid on sand mix which can allow some movement.

If you have been provided with a shed, a hardstanding access will be provided. If you wish to install a new shed, please refer to Platform's Alteration Guide.

Can I add additional slabs in my front garden?

Additional slabs cannot be put down in the front garden to facilitate the parking of cars, vans or caravans.

Paths next to driveway/ parking spaces.

In some cases you may have slabbed path access next to your parking space or driveway. Please take extreme care to not drive any vehicle over them as they may crack. They are only designed for foot traffic. If they get damaged you will be expected to fund their replacement.

Some areas of the lawn hold standing water longer than others. What do I do and is this an issue?

In some cases we may investigate, but before we do we would expect you to:

- Follow garden care as explained in this guidance for at least 6 months e.g. fork the lawn to help water drain away etc.
- Keep a log with photos of the problem area for 6 months so that you can share it with us at the end of that period.
- During this time for each occurrence take a first photo immediately after the rain has stopped, a second photo 2 hours later and a 3rd photo after a further 2 hours (if possible). If significant standing water still remains (and there hasn't been continuous period of rainfall prior to this event), please make a note in your log.
- NB: Platform will only look into issues reported within the first 2 years of your home being handed over from the developer.



How to contact us

We're here to help and you can contact us in the following ways:

Online at www.platformhg.com/contact-us and complete the web form

By phone on 0333 200 7304 - please note our call waiting times vary depending on when you call us.

In writing to our head office at
Platform Housing Group,
1700 Solihull Parkway,
Birmingham Business Park,
Solihull,
B37 7YD.