



HLL Site Preparation

Site preparation is a critical step to ensure proper functioning of the planned Best Management Practice (BMP), and the success of the desired plants.

Prior to installation and planting, the existing sod needs to be removed. Removal of the existing sod reduces competition for water and nutrients between plants which maximizes the chances of survival of the desired plants.

Some weeds can be very persistent, and regardless of the method utilized, selective weeding will likely be necessary for several growing seasons.

There are several effective options for the removal of the existing lawn:

1. tilling
2. physical removal of sod layer
3. use of a broad-spectrum herbicide (e.g., Roundup)

Tilling:

Tilling the soil and adding a thick layer (4-6") of mulch or compost on top will block new plant growth while improving soil quality.

It is best to do this during the fall and allowing the mulch to sit the remainder of the season and over winter.

In the following growing season till the mulch down into the soil, there is no need to remove it. Add a new layer of mulch about 3" thick and plant into the mulch.



If you are planning to remove a large area of vegetation, black plastic sheeting can be used in place of the mulch.

The sheeting smothers and cooks the seeds that germinate after tilling.

In the growing season prior to planting, till the area and apply the black plastic sheeting and secure it so it doesn't blow away. In the following growing season, add a 3" layer of mulch and plant.

To help improve soil quality, a layer of cardboard or newspaper can be laid out beneath the mulch, compost, or plastic. This layer will decompose, adding nutrients into the soil.

You can skip the waiting period and plant directly following the tilling. However, doing so will require much more extensive weeding and maintenance.





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Physical Removal:

To remove the existing layer of sod, a shovel can be used to dig out the soil. Outline the area to be removed, then water the soil well a couple days before beginning the removal. The soil should be wet but not saturated to make working easier. Cut through to a depth of about 6" to remove the root system.

The sod can be cut into strips to make it easier to handle. Once cut, peel the sod back and remove it. This method is recommended only for small areas as it is very labor-intensive.

After removing the old layer, add a layer of mulch or compost to replace the soil that has been removed.



Broad-spectrum herbicide:

Herbicides are highly effective for killing existing plants. Broad-spectrum herbicides such as Roundup will kill all plants, they are not selective. They come pre-mixed and are easy to use.

If using an herbicide, you must follow the label for usage, application instructions, and personal safety. If you are not comfortable applying the herbicide personally, you can hire a licensed applicator. It can be safe to plant very quickly after application but be sure to follow recommendations for the specific herbicide used.

If you are working near water, you must use an herbicide specifically labelled for use near water. They are formulated differently and allow the chemical to better stay in place.

Remember, the Antrim Conservation District and the Healthy Lakes Landscaping Initiative is here to help you with planning and designing your garden. Don't hesitate to contact us:

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