



Why should I prepare my site?

Proper preparation of a site will result in fewer weeds, better soil structure, and healthier plants when you install your garden. By giving the plants the best start possible, your garden will grow in and look nice more quickly, you will have less maintenance to remove weeds or unwanted grass, and your plants will have better survivability. Strong, well-established native gardens require little to no supplemental watering, pesticides, and fertilizers.



Other considerations:

- Call Miss Dig at 811 or request utilities location on their website **BEFORE** you do any digging.
- Use marking paint to outline your planting area.
- Time your preparation methods for a planting time in the spring (May-June) or the fall (Sept-Oct).

Methods to Remove Turf:

Smothering - *Recommended Method for Smaller Spaces*

- Stretch a single layer of black, impermeable plastic over the area.
- Secure the plastic in place with landscape staples or bricks.
- Leave for 6-8 weeks, and then remove a couple of days before planting.
- The lack of light and water will kill existing plants, and the heat generated from the sun hitting the plastic will kill existing weed seeds.
- Smothering can also be done with 8 layers of newspaper or 3 layers of cardboard left for at least 6 months.

Tilling

- Most lawn areas will need a large rear-tine rototiller to break up the turf grass. You can till after a good rain or a day after watering your lawn, but don't till soil that is wet (muddy or sticking to the tines).
- After tilling, pull out roots or big chunks of grass, and level the soil.
- Let the area sit for 2-3 weeks so new weeds come up. Pull the weeds or treat them with a non-selective herbicide.
- Apply organic material, like a couple of inches of compost.
- If herbicide is used, wait until after the re-entry period to plant.
- If you have sod (rather than seeded) lawn, you can use a sod cutter or spade to remove the grass layer. This method removes a lot of topsoil and organic matter, so you will need to add clean soil and organic matter back and plant into it.

Herbicide - *Recommended Method for Larger Spaces*

- Choose a non-selective herbicide.
- **READ THE PRODUCT LABEL.**
- Time the application of herbicide far enough in advance to account for the re-entry interval.
- Typically, the plant needs to be actively growing for the herbicide to be effective, and healthy turfgrass will likely require more than one application.
- Once the re-entry interval listed on the label has passed, it is safe to plant.
- Don't remove the dead plant material, plant through the dead grass and cover the area with mulch.

Cautions:

- **Read the label and follow all instructions. The label is the law.**
- **Do not apply when it is windy or rainy. This will result in drift, killing plants you didn't intend to, and chemical runoff.**
- **Wear long sleeves, pants, gloves, eye protection, and any other protective equipment needed.**