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COLUMNS

Campbell Vaughn: See these tips for adding sod to your lawns in the winter

Campbell Vaughn Columnist

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Last week, I mentioned a few thoughts on adding sod during the winter months and especially trying to control all this mud from tree removal equipment all over town. This part will expand by giving some pointers that will make a big difference in getting a healthy lawn established quickly and effectively.

Make sure you have good drainage. Pooling water and constantly wet grass cause rot. Lawns can soak, especially in the winter when the moisture is not being drawn in by the plant because the grass is dormant. Excess water also evaporates a lot slower with cooler temperatures. Ground saturation, like we currently have, is also more prevalent in cooler seasons. A 1% to 2% grade is minimum for any turf.

Preparation is key. Do yourself a big favor and take a soil sample. Knowing what nutrients are available as well as the soil pH is the best way to give the proper boost grass needs once it hits the ground. In most areas of Georgia, we tend to have more acidic natural soils. Our warm season grasses require a more neutral pH which is in the 5.8-6.4 range. The soil sample will help with this. If you need to raise the pH, then it is best to apply lime before you do the sodding.

Spray the area with glyphosate to kill any grasses or weeds that may be growing where you want to plant. Do this according to the label (above 60 degrees and well hydrated). Wait a few days. Some folks like to till, but the less you disturb the land the less weeds there will be. Try and remove as much debris as possible. Roots, straw, bark, mulch, shaving, etc., need to be cleared from the area. Use a tractor with a box blade to level the area if possible. A smooth level area now is a lot easier than dealing with humps and valleys for the remainder of your lawn's life. Aesthetically, smooth is better, but mowing the lawn without scalping parts is the big reason for a level yard.

Campbell Vaughn: Be careful when planting new grass in cold weather. Here are some tips.

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Locate the area where you want to sod and get an accurate square footage of the proposed lawn. Bermuda and Centipede pallets of sod are about 500 square feet. Zoysia and St. Augustine are usually about 450 square feet per pallet. If you are getting the sod delivered, make sure that you can get a large wide forklift into the area. Sod isn't light, so the closer you get it to the intended area, the less labor it is to get it attached to the ground. Put the sod in the outlying beds so you don't have to work around a bulky heavy pallet in the middle of the lawn.

All turf grass needs sun and most lawns appreciate lots of it. If someone says there is turf grass that grows in shade, they are lying to you. You can have some lawn in shady areas but to have a good full thick yard, plan for your grass to get at least 5-6 hours of direct sun at an absolute minimum. St. Augustine and some varieties of Zoysia will handle more shade than Centipede. Most Bermuda grass won't tolerate shade. TifTuf Bermuda will handle a small bit of shade.

All these grasses have their place in landscapes across our part of the state, so with the large investment of time and money it takes to sod a lawn make sure to choose wisely.

There will be a camellia sale at the Church of the Good Shepard, 2230 Walton Way, 8:30 a.m to 3:30 p.m. Feb. 1. The Home and Garden Show will be happening all weekend and our Augusta Area Master Gardeners will have a booth, so come by and check them out. I will also be speaking on my favorite native landscape plants on the main stage at 4 p.m. Jan. 31 at the show.

