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# Landscaping Questions and Care

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South Minneapolis Residential Soil Contamination Site  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

June 2010

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We appreciate your time and patience during the soil cleanup at your property. We understand you may have questions about what to expect with your yard so we have put together some information in hopes of answering some of your questions.

## **What do I need to do with my lawn?**

We will be watering for the first 6 weeks after landscaping to help the grass and plants get established. After the 6 week watering period is done, water so the grass receives about 1 inch of water every seven to 10 days based on rainfall to maintain the grass.

You may begin to see the grass start to germinate within the first week after seeding. When the seed germinates, try to keep traffic on the grass to a minimum to prevent damage to the young, tender grass. This is most important until the grass is about 1 inch tall. Once the grass is 2½ to 3 inches tall you can mow as needed, but you shouldn't cut the grass shorter than 2 inches tall. For the final cutting of the season, the grass should never be cut shorter than 1¼ inches tall. It is important to begin cutting grass once it reaches 2½ to 3 inches tall to help control weed growth.

## **Do I need to remove the mulch or straw mat?**

Grass seed was spread on the yard and covered with either hydromulch (blue-green material) or erosion control blanket (straw mat). Both will break down naturally and do not need to be removed. The hydromulch will break down over time and release nutrients for the grass seed. The erosion control blanket was only used in areas with a steeper slope to keep the soil in place until the grass is established. Grass will grow through the erosion control blanket and the sun will break down the mesh that holds the straw together.

## **What if the grass doesn't come up?**

We will be back to meet with you after the 6 week watering period to do an inspection to see if there are any issues we need to address. If the grass does not come up or if there are large bare spots, we will reseed as necessary to take care of it.

## **What can be done about weeds in the grass?**

Weed seeds can be present in the soil prior to seeding. Mowing the lawn once it reaches 2½ to 3 inches is the best way to minimize weed growth. A pre-emergent herbicide could be applied to the soil prior to planting the grass seed. However, the pre-emergent herbicide would also prevent the germination of the grass seed. Because we can't get the grass to grow and prevent the weeds at the same time, the best way is to manage the weeds once the grass has established. Mowing is the best option. A broadleaf herbicide may be applied to the lawn after the third mowing of the mature grass to abate the weeds.

## **I don't see some of my plants. Were they planted?**

Some perennials are only available at certain times each year because of their growth cycle. For example, spring bulbs like tulips and daffodils need to be planted in late fall (typically October) for them to grow the following years. If there are plants at your property that we were unable to plant because of the season, we have identified these plants and will be back to plant them when it is the correct season.

If there were plants that you asked us not to replace, these plants were not ordered or replanted. These were indicated on the landscape inventory for your property as agreed to during our meeting before work started.

US EPA RECORDS CENTER REGION 5



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### **What if my new plants don't survive?**

There is a 1-year warranty on the plants that were replaced at your property after the cleanup was completed. We watered the plants after the landscaping was complete to help them get established. You should follow standard landscaping guidelines like you would with your existing plants (see the next question for additional information). It is expected that they will survive with normal care, but if they don't we will replace them. If you have plants that require replacement you may contact the project field office at the number listed below.

However, the EPA cannot be responsible for landscaping or grading issues that are a result of changes that you made at the property. Examples of items that would not be covered by the warranty include:

- Damage from pets digging in the ground or pulling up the grass.
- Construction activities at the property after the EPA work was completed.
- Relandscaping after the EPA work was completed. This includes plants that have been planted or moved by the owner.

### **How should I care for the trees and plants?**

No pruning should be done to trees and shrubs within the first year unless it is to repair damage, such as a broken branch that needs to be removed. The trees and plants will require watering depending on the amount of precipitation. Give trees a deep watering as often as needed to keep the soil moist. For shrubs and perennials, keep the root zone moist, but not waterlogged. A good soaking will moisten the ground but you don't want so much that you have standing water around the plants. The amount of water needed will depend on the weather, but shrubs and perennials should be watered at least once a week during dry periods.

To help keep your plants healthy as they grow, follow standard landscaping guidelines. Shrubs should be fertilized in the spring or fall using a commercial fertilizer suited to that type of plant. Because different plants have different requirements, you should select an appropriate fertilizer from a local nursery. Remove dead leaves from perennials as necessary. If the plants appear crowded after a couple of growing seasons, it may be necessary to move some of the plants.

After the first year, fertilize trees annually. Apply one-quarter pound of a commercial slow release fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter. Broadcast the fertilizer evenly on the ground under the spread of the branches. The preferred application time is early spring or late fall just before freeze.

### **How do we contact you if there is a problem?**

You can call the project field office at 612-721-8499. You can also contact Leah Evison of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at 651-757-2898.

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