

# Sod vs. seed: Which is your best option?

A pristine lawn can be the finishing touch to a landscape and add significant value to a home. According to a joint study by the University of Alabama and the University of Texas at Arlington, homes with high curb appeal sell for an average of 7 percent more than similar houses without inviting exteriors.

When it comes to establishing a lawn, homeowners have two key options: starting from seed or installing sod. Each comes with its share of advantages and disadvantages. Which option makes the most sense for a given lawn will boil down to various factors, including homeowners' budgets.

**Seed**  
Seed is the first thing homeowners may think of when planning a lawn. Seed is an inexpensive, easily installed option. Plus, garden centers sell a variety of seeds specific to particular regions and climates. The home improvement resource Fixr says seed will cost an average of 24 cents per square foot installed compared to \$1.29 for sod. That affordability compels many homeowners to turn to seed. However, seed can take up to two years to produce a lush lawn and it requires high maintenance in



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the initial months to establish the grass.

Seed also requires greater soil preparation, including tilling to loosen soil and keeping the lawn well watered until the grass is hardy. Weeds also may mix in with seed more readily, meaning weed prevention becomes an additional task.

**Sod**  
One of the advantages to sod is that it can produce an instant lawn. When time is of the essence, sod will pro-

duce a complete lawn nearly as soon as the sod is laid. Sod can be used to mitigate soil erosion, as it works faster than seed, which needs to establish a root system to keep soil in check. Also, sod does not require as much soil preparation as seed.

The potential disadvantages to sod are its cost and the time it takes to install it, particularly on a large property. In addition, sod will require careful maintenance for at least the first

two weeks until the sod takes stronger roots. It can be an expensive mistake if sod doesn't thrive and new pieces need to be installed. The Family Handyman says sod tends to be sun-loving and may not work in shadier areas of a property.

Sod and seed are the two main options for lush lawns. Each has its perks, and homeowners can speak with a local lawn specialist to determine which option is best for their lawn.

## Did you know some plants are considered invasive?

Homeowners should give due consideration to whether or not plants are considered invasive species before introducing new plants on their properties.

According to the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, invasive species of plants can lead to the extinction of native plants and animals. Invasive plant species also can reduce biodiversity and cause significant fundamental disruptions to local ecosystems.

Though non-native plants are often cherished for their unique looks, homeowners planting new gardens or supplementing existing gardens with new plants are urged to plant only native species. Such an approach benefits plants and also local wildlife that depends on native plant species for food and cover.

# Balcony plants can put a smile on your face

## From Perennial Power

Balcony plants make your balcony even prettier. And they make you happy, too, since that's the mysterious power of plants.

By carefully selecting various perennials, you'll be sitting out on a delightful balcony until well into late summer, according to iVerde Perennial Power.

**Reliable balcony plants**  
Obviously, gardening on a balcony means planting in pots and containers. Fortunately, there are plenty of perennials that are great for container gardening. Do you have to deal with bright sunlight and strong winds? If so, choose Mediterranean perennials such as lavender (*Lavandula*) and rosemary (*Rosmarinus*). Stonecrop (*Sedum*) and wallflower (*Erysimum*) can also handle harsh conditions.

**Go vertical**  
Vertical gardening is the solution for enjoying plants on a balcony because they don't take up much floor space. A railing provides the perfect



support for climbing plants. You could also cover the rear wall or partitions with plants. Use items such as pallets, boxes, gutters or grow bags to construct a vertical garden. You might even want to build a living wall by using prefab systems.

**An easy veggie garden**

## on your balcony

You can even grow your own vegetables on a balcony by using a square-yard container or a collection of pots. Edible perennials like mint (*Mentha*) and thyme (*Thymus*) make vegetable growing on a balcony a snap. These are also plants that produce beautiful flowers.

## Tips

- Get creative: you can grow balcony plants in tubs, tin cans and baskets. Just be sure to make holes in the bottom so that excess rain or irrigation water can escape easily.
- Little or no sun? You can still create a beautiful plant-filled balcony by using shade-loving plants like plantain Lily (*Hosta*), ivy (*Hedera*) and cranesbill (*Geranium*).
- You might also want to select plants that attract bees and butterflies. You could then enjoy the wonders of nature right outside your door.
- More inspirational ideas for balconies are available at [www.perennialpower.eu](http://www.perennialpower.eu)

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