Updated Guidelines for Turf Removal

Expert advice from a local landscaper

How do I get started?

Alternative 1 – Dig:
Turn off irrigation connected to the turf area to be removed, and allow time for the grass to die off.

✓ Water the area you plan to remove a few days ahead of time to make the soil easier to work with. The soil should be moist but not soggy.

✓ Cut the turf into parallel strips using an edger or sharp spade (with square edge). Be sure to keep the size of these strips small (approximately 1 foot wide by 2 feet long), otherwise they will be difficult to move.

Caution: Be careful not to cut into your irrigation lines.

✓ Pry up one end of a piece of turf and slide a shovel or similar gardening tool under it. Cut through any roots, and lift out the precut piece. If the underside of the turf contains loose soil, you can shake most of the soil back into your landscape when the turf is lifted (This will help preserve valuable top soil).

✓ Lastly, roll up the strips. (Note: If you are removing a lot of turf, consider renting a sod cutter.)

Alternative 2 – Till:
Turn off irrigation connected to the turf area to be removed, and allow time for the grass to die off.

✓ Water the area you plan to remove a few days ahead of time to make the soil easier to work with. The soil should be moist but not soggy.

✓ When tilling your turf, please note that breaking up well-established turf often requires a heavier tiller and you may need to complete more than one pass. After tilling your turf, remove and shake the soil from any remaining clumps of grass.

Caution: Be careful not to cut into your irrigation lines.

If you remove turf borders (narrow strips between the sidewalk and street) you need to leave some space.

✓ Where the edge of the removed turf abuts paving or a remaining turf area, it is necessary to dig a shallow trench that is 2”- 4” deep and 12” wide. This helps to keep the mulch in place.

For turf disposal:
✓ Place your turf in your yard where it can dry out.

✓ Once the grass has dried out, then turn over the turf and use a rake or similar equipment to separate the grass from the top soil.

✓ The remaining grass can be put in your yard waste recycling bin, and your top soil can go back to your yard for other plantings.