

B-4-2 STANDARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS

FOR

SOIL PREPARATION, TOPSOILING, AND SOIL AMENDMENTS

Definition

The process of preparing the soils to sustain adequate vegetative stabilization.

Purpose

To provide a suitable soil medium for vegetative growth.

Conditions Where Practice Applies

Where vegetative stabilization is to be established.

Criteria

A. Soil Preparation

1. Temporary Stabilization

- a. Seedbed preparation consists of loosening soil to a depth of 3 to 5 inches by means of suitable agricultural or construction equipment, such as disc harrows or chisel plows or rippers mounted on construction equipment. After the soil is loosened, it must not be rolled or dragged smooth but left in the roughened condition. Slopes 3:1 or flatter are to be tracked with ridges running parallel to the contour of the slope.
- b. Apply fertilizer and lime as prescribed on the plans.
- c. Incorporate lime and fertilizer into the top 3 to 5 inches of soil by disking or other suitable means.

2. Permanent Stabilization

- a. A soil test is required for any earth disturbance of 5 acres or more. The minimum soil conditions required for permanent vegetative establishment are:
 - i. Soil pH between 6.0 and 7.0.
 - ii. Soluble salts less than 500 parts per million (ppm).
 - iii. Soil contains less than 40 percent clay but enough fine grained material (greater than 30 percent silt plus clay) to provide the capacity to hold a moderate amount of moisture. An exception: if lovegrass will be planted, then a sandy soil (less than 30 percent silt plus clay) would be acceptable.
 - iv. Soil contains 1.5 percent minimum organic matter by weight.
 - v. Soil contains sufficient pore space to permit adequate root penetration.
- b. Application of amendments or topsoil is required if on-site soils do not meet the above conditions.
- c. Graded areas must be maintained in a true and even grade as specified on the approved plan, then scarified or otherwise loosened to a depth of 3 to 5 inches.

- d. Apply soil amendments as specified on the approved plan or as indicated by the results of a soil test.
- e. Mix soil amendments into the top 3 to 5 inches of soil by disking or other suitable means. Rake lawn areas to smooth the surface, remove large objects like stones and branches, and ready the area for seed application. Loosen surface soil by dragging with a heavy chain or other equipment to roughen the surface where site conditions will not permit normal seedbed preparation. Track slopes 3:1 or flatter with tracked equipment leaving the soil in an irregular condition with ridges running parallel to the contour of the slope. Leave the top 1 to 3 inches of soil loose and friable. Seedbed loosening may be unnecessary on newly disturbed areas.

B. Topsoiling

- 1. Topsoil is placed over prepared subsoil prior to establishment of permanent vegetation. The purpose is to provide a suitable soil medium for vegetative growth. Soils of concern have low moisture content, low nutrient levels, low pH, materials toxic to plants, and/or unacceptable soil gradation.
- 2. Topsoil salvaged from an existing site may be used provided it meets the standards as set forth in these specifications. Typically, the depth of topsoil to be salvaged for a given soil type can be found in the representative soil profile section in the Soil Survey published by USDA-NRCS.
- 3. Topsoiling is limited to areas having 2:1 or flatter slopes where:
 - a. The texture of the exposed subsoil/parent material is not adequate to produce vegetative growth.
 - b. The soil material is so shallow that the rooting zone is not deep enough to support plants or furnish continuing supplies of moisture and plant nutrients.
 - c. The original soil to be vegetated contains material toxic to plant growth.
 - d. The soil is so acidic that treatment with limestone is not feasible.
- 4. Areas having slopes steeper than 2:1 require special consideration and design.
- 5. Topsoil Specifications: Soil to be used as topsoil must meet the following criteria:
 - a. Topsoil must be a loam, sandy loam, clay loam, silt loam, sandy clay loam, or loamy sand. Other soils may be used if recommended by an agronomist or soil scientist and approved by the appropriate approval authority. Topsoil must not be a mixture of contrasting textured subsoils and must contain less than 5 percent by volume of cinders, stones, slag, coarse fragments, gravel, sticks, roots, trash, or other materials larger than 1½ inches in diameter.
 - b. Topsoil must be free of noxious plants or plant parts such as Bermuda grass, quack grass, Johnson grass, nut sedge, poison ivy, thistle, or others as specified.
 - c. Topsoil substitutes or amendments, as recommended by a qualified agronomist or soil scientist and approved by the appropriate approval authority, may be used in lieu of natural topsoil.
- 6. Topsoil Application
 - a. Erosion and sediment control practices must be maintained when applying topsoil.
 - b. Uniformly distribute topsoil in a 5 to 8 inch layer and lightly compact to a minimum thickness of 4 inches. Spreading is to be performed in such a manner that sodding or seeding can proceed with a minimum of additional soil preparation and tillage. Any irregularities in the surface resulting from topsoiling or other operations must be corrected in order to prevent the formation of depressions or water pockets.
 - c. Topsoil must not be placed if the topsoil or subsoil is in a frozen or muddy condition, when the subsoil is excessively wet or in a condition that may otherwise be detrimental to proper grading

and seedbed preparation.

C. Soil Amendments (Fertilizer and Lime Specifications)

1. Soil tests must be performed to determine the exact ratios and application rates for both lime and fertilizer on sites having disturbed areas of 5 acres or more. Soil analysis may be performed by a recognized private or commercial laboratory. Soil samples taken for engineering purposes may also be used for chemical analyses.
2. Fertilizers must be uniform in composition, free flowing and suitable for accurate application by appropriate equipment. Manure may be substituted for fertilizer with prior approval from the appropriate approval authority. Fertilizers must all be delivered to the site fully labeled according to the applicable laws and must bear the name, trade name or trademark and warranty of the producer.
3. Lime materials must be ground limestone (hydrated or burnt lime may be substituted except when hydroseeding) which contains at least 50 percent total oxides (calcium oxide plus magnesium oxide). Limestone must be ground to such fineness that at least 50 percent will pass through a #100 mesh sieve and 98 to 100 percent will pass through a #20 mesh sieve.
4. Lime and fertilizer are to be evenly distributed and incorporated into the top 3 to 5 inches of soil by disking or other suitable means.
5. Where the subsoil is either highly acidic or composed of heavy clays, spread ground limestone at the rate of 4 to 8 tons/acre (200-400 pounds per 1,000 square feet) prior to the placement of topsoil.