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Topsoil Stockpiling

Phase Construction

DESCRIPTION/GOALS

Grading for construction removes the top layer of soil (topsoil), which contains nutrients and organic matter necessary for plant growth. In topsoil stockpiling, the topsoil is put into piles and conserved for later use on the site. When done properly (i.e., measures are taken to prevent erosion of stockpiles) this measure can preserve valuable topsoil, saving money for developers and preventing sediment, nutrients and organic matter from contaminating waterways. Topsoil stockpiling is integral to successful phasing of construction projects (Fact Sheet 4).

TECHNIQUES

The key to successful topsoil stockpiling is stabilizing the stockpiles immediately. Seeding is often used to stabilize stockpiles, and should be completed immediately. Another option is to place plastic sheeting on the stockpile to protect it from rainfall. This measure is valuable because the sheeting can be reused on other parts of the project. If a stockpile will be uncovered for the winter, other erosion control measures such as mulching may be needed (See Fact Sheet 7).

Another important consideration in stockpiling topsoil is locating the pile so that it will not interfere with construction or cause potential environmental problems. For example, stockpiles should not be located near the edge of streams or riparian buffers. The sediment control plan should specify where stockpiles will be located.

LIMITATIONS/CHALLENGES

Topsoil stockpiling can be difficult on very small construction sites (e.g., less than one acre). On these sites, it may be difficult for designers to find a place on the site to store the soil that will not interfere with construction. In addition, on sites with very poor soil, topsoil will need to be imported regardless of whether cut soils are stockpiled. In these cases, the economic value of topsoil stockpiling is limited somewhat.



Source: Illinois Urban Manual
Illinois EPA

APPROXIMATE**COST:**

No Construction Cost

EFFECTIVENESSLow *Mid* HighErosion/
Sediment Control

✓

Long-Term
Pollution Reduction

✓

Nutrient/
Stream Protection

✓

EASE OF APPLICATION

Difficult Average Easy

Installation

✓

Maintenance

✓

LIMITATIONS

- Very small sites
- Very infertile soils
- Poorly planned sites