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Topseal Systems Ltd



GreenTop Maintenance Manual

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What to Expect From your GreenTop Roof

Roof Preparation

There is a common misconception that extensive green roofs and sedums plants in particular are always green, or that from ground level appear to resemble grass. This is not the case. They consist mainly of low growing drought tolerant Sedum plants, but may also include other species such as Saxifraga, wild grasses, moss and even herbs. The appearance of planting will change along with the seasonal weather cycles and this is perfectly natural. It is also expected that more grass or moss may be present during the wetter months, simply because the conditions exist for these species of plant to exist. However, they will tend to die off during the dry summer months, because the shallow free-draining substrate in the system does not hold sufficient moisture for these plants to survive. There are approximately 10-14 different plant species in the GreenTop roof system with some being very similar in appearance to others, but perhaps being more 'drought tolerant' under certain conditions. Not every type of species will survive and the more dominant will be expected to prevail with time, simply because they adapt better to any given location. However, we would expect at least 50% of species to flourish regardless. Another misconception is that extensive roofs are maintenance free. This is incorrect. They are 'low maintenance', but not 'no maintenance'. The Sedum Turf for example contains a slow release nutrient and so fertiliser must be applied when the appearance starts to show a lack of nutrient content.



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Extensive roofs that have a deeper substrate growing medium, with the vegetation provided from specifically chosen Plug plants or hydro-planting, will generally exhibit a greater variety of plant species that may also include grasses and herbs. Here it is expected that an increased amount of dead vegetation following flowering will occur and therefore the need for more maintenance to remove the dead seed heads. Sedum plants absorb and store water in their leaves. They use this water to survive during times of drought. A water reservoir is incorporated into the system beneath the growing medium and filter fleece, but the function of this is to hold water after rainfall for sufficient time for the plants to take on the water via the roots. It is not a long-term water storage medium; so don't be too concerned if it is dry. Just check the leaves to see if they are fleshy and don't appear dried out. In winter, the plant appears to shrink back and the leaves become small and tight. This is because the plant has sufficient water present in the substrate, but will hold little so it is able to withstand frost.

General Maintenance

General maintenance is normally carried out annually during springtime. However, certain tasks e.g. the removal of weeds or accumulated leaf litter, may need to be done during the Autumn, depending to some extent upon the surrounding environment i.e. trees, dependent upon the location of the roof. The following procedures should be carried out as indicated below, in order to ensure the roof is maintained in good condition and to protect the validity of any guarantees offered.



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Basic Roof Related Maintenance Procedures

Ensure safe access can be gained to the roof and that relevant Health and Safety procedures are followed when working at roof level. Safety harness attachment points or man safe systems should always be used where provided.

Remove all debris and leaves from the roof surface, rainwater outlets, chutes, gutters, etc. All debris must be removed from the roof and not simply flushed down rainwater pipes. Roofs in the vicinity of taller trees will need more frequent maintenance.

We recommend removing dead leaves during the spring and again in the autumn, to ensure that fallen leaves do not cover and suffocate the sedum plants.

Open the lid of the Inspection chambers and ensure that all rainwater outlets (including down pipes) are free from blockages and that water can flow freely.

Ensure that any protective metal flashings or termination bars remain securely fixed and in place.

Examine all mastic sealant and mortar pointing for signs of degradation, and repair or renew as necessary.

Where promenade tiles or paving slabs exist, ensure that they remain secure in position and in good condition.

Please ensure that any items of plant/equipment that may have been introduced to the roof, are sited on a suitable isolated slab and that any fixings that may have been used to secure them do not penetrate the waterproofing.



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Report any signs of damage or degradation to us immediately, so that arrangements can be made for remedial work to be carried out if necessary. It is recommended that a roof plan marked with co-ordinates be used to record the findings of the inspection. This will avoid confusion and provide an on-going record of roof performance, which can be compared year on year.

Works to adjoining areas - When carrying out maintenance to adjoining areas, care must be taken not to damage the system.

Alterations - Any alterations to the system that may affect its integrity will invalidate the guarantee.

Plant Related Maintenance Task Required

1) Plant encroachment.

Any planting, which has encroached into drainage outlets, walkways and the vegetation barriers (pebbles), should be removed. This removed vegetation can be used to repair any bare patches if required (see below). If movement/settlement of the pebble vegetation barrier has occurred, then additional washed stone pebbles (similar to the existing) should be added.

2) Monitor the colour and rate of growth.

The colour and rate of growth should be examined, to establish the health of the plants. It must be stressed that many things can affect the growth and colour of the sedum plants. Generally, plants tend to be greener in wetter mild conditions (springtime) and where the roof pitch is shallow.



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During May, June and July the plants flower and you will see a mixture of colours - whites, pinks, yellows and even some purple. Some species of sedum blush red naturally during the summer and autumn, (e.g. *Sedum album* 'coral carpet') and so the roof takes on a more 'red/brown appearance. This is particularly the case once plants have flowered, leaving remnants of dry brown seed heads. The best visible indication of health is if the leaves are fleshy and contain plenty of water. When exposed to extreme conditions, sedum plants have a tendency to turn a deep red colour. Please note that that this is a natural phenomenon and that this behaviour is important to the plant to acclimatise for surviving through a cold winter or hot summer. This usually occurs during climate extremes e.g. extreme hot or cold weather, prolonged drought or in very exposed conditions or when the plants are in distress, for example through lack of nutrient (fertiliser). Plants affected by a severe lack of water shrink back and the leaves will tend to be small and very tight. In distress the plants change gradually to a deep crimson red. If an Irrigation system is fitted, it is best to run it only during prolonged dry weather for limited periods – see 'Irrigation' information below, If the plants are in this condition, but have received regular rainfall, then the likely problem is lack of nutrient and fertiliser should be applied. In shade, Sedums tend to grow greener and leggier. In general, sedums do not like permanent shade, so either avoid areas under larger trees or surrounded by buildings, or make it possible for more natural light to reach the roof. There may be noticeable



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differences in the growth of similar sedums in a different area of the same roof. This emphasises the living nature of each individual roof. If problems are suspected, Topseal Systems may be contacted for advice and if necessary, a suitable course of action.

3) Weeding.

Sedum Turf will at times include moss and grass. If considered excessive, provision should be made to remove any unwanted vegetation, e.g. weeds/ grasses/ saplings. These can be removed manually by hand, or by using a 'spot weed wipe', although care should be taken to follow specific instructions regarding the use of any proprietary products. Weeds are a problem of aesthetics rather than damaging the roof, but large areas of weed or grass should be removed, as should saplings. After removal of weeds treat area as if it were a bare patch (see below).

4) Repairing Bare Patches.

Bare patches can be repaired easily, but only during the growing season (ideally during March/April or late August until the end of September). Take clumps of Sedum from areas of abundant growth and place on bare patches pressing gently into the growing medium. They can then have a light sprinkling of MC1 growing medium and nutrient to improve and speed up root growth. The Sedum cuttings will grow best if this is carried out during spring maintenance and



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kept moist and free of temperature extremes (frost and intense sun). Compost or topsoil can be used but it is advised to use specialised substrate as previously installed.

5) Fertiliser sedum roofs

Topseal Systems sedum turf is grown in a very shallow growing medium that contains a slow release nutrient lasting approximately 24 months so the application of new fertiliser is crucial after this period to ensure that the plants remain healthy. Fertiliser should be applied during March/April. It is important to carry out this task during this time, because it helps to prepare the plants for extreme weather conditions and flowering and also because it allows the different species to gain all their nutrients without competing against each other. A good organic slow release fertiliser can be obtained direct from Topseal Systems in 10kg bags (each bag sufficient for covering 175m²) total roof area at growing medium depth of 50/70mm. This can be applied using a hand held spreader or strewn by hand from a bucket. Fertilising larger roofs should be done using a trolley applicator; fertiliser pellets settling on damp leaves may have a detrimental effect i.e. burning the leaves. It is therefore recommended that the fertiliser is lightly 'watered in' immediately after application. Dung based organic fertilisers should be avoided.



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6) Fertiliser for either plug planted or hydro-planted extensive green roofs Use a 6-month slow release chemical fertiliser with an NPK ratio of 15, 9, 14 applied at a coverage rate of 50gm/m².

Application: Small areas (up to 30m²) can be applied using a hand held spreader or strewn by hand from a bucket.

7) Irrigation – for Sedum Turf systems on slopes exceeding 19 degrees Sedum plants absorb and store water in their leaves. They use this water to survive during times of drought. Adequate moisture retention must be incorporated into the system beneath the Growing medium, but the function of this is to hold water after rainfall for sufficient time for the plants to take on the water. It is not a water storage medium; so don't be concerned if it is dry. Check the leaves to see if they are fleshy and not dried out. Generally speaking, sedum roofs require no artificial watering following establishment. However, for sedum systems on slopes exceeding 19 degrees pitch, we recommend the installation of a 'leaky pipe or a drip line irrigation system. Irrigation will ensure that water is readily available on steeper roofs during warm, dry weather where the thinner systems are more prone to drying out due to wind and natural evaporation, particularly roofs with a south facing aspect. Leaky pipe or drip line irrigation systems are relatively inexpensive and considering the unpredictable weather patterns over the past 15 years, we feel that this small additional cost is a really worthwhile investment to maintain your sedum roof finish in top condition. Irrigation should only be activated during prolonged periods of hot, dry weather, or if



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the sedum plants are showing signs of distress. The irrigation system is best activated for 2-3 hours, preferably at dawn or dusk to minimize unnecessary evaporation. Then once every 4-6 days for the duration of the hot weather conditions. This can be achieved using an inexpensive battery powered programmable timer. Please note - continuous daily watering is neither recommended nor necessary, as this will only promote weeds and other unwanted plant species.

Advice and supply of irrigation equipment

Please contact Topseal Systems Ltd

Support

Extensive roofs require only minimal maintenance and we are happy to offer advice on issues concerning your green roof and how to keep it in good order. We believe our products and systems are of the highest standard and we are happy to talk through any queries or concerns. It can help greatly to provide a photograph to accompany any such queries.

Please note: In the event of any query arising which it is thought may affect the condition of the system, then Topseal Systems should be contacted at the address below. We cannot accept responsibility or any problem or failure due to use outside those parameters for which the system was designed or 'acts of god' beyond our control e.g. extreme weather conditions or damage through pests.