

Going Green with Lawn Care

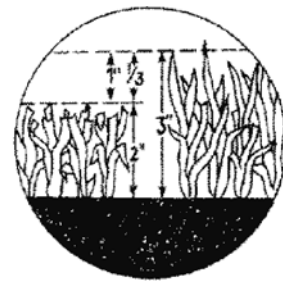
Did you know that a half-acre lawn produces more than 2 tons or nearly 100 bags of grass clippings each year?

Think of all the time, money and effort it would take to bag all those clippings. Why go through all that hassle when it's really not necessary? Two tons of grass clippings per household with in the Village does not seem to be a lot for a year of mowing. With landfill cost of \$67.00 per ton and approximately 1440 households the potential cost could be as high as \$193,000.00 per year.

You can have a healthy green lawn by leaving grass clippings where they fall!

It's simple... Grass clippings are actually beneficial to your lawn if handled properly. By using a mulching mower, you will: have a healthier lawn, save on fertilizer costs and save over 30% of the time involved in cutting your yard. Mulched grass clippings recycle the fertilizer you have already applied to your yard. In addition, the clippings can supply about 30% of the nitrogen your lawn needs to keep green and healthy. Grass leaf is nearly 90% water and it decomposes in just a couple of weeks. Consequently, leaving the mulched clippings in your yard just returns the minerals and nutrients to the soil; and, nitrogen is released as the leaf decomposes.

	Mowing Heights During	
Turfgrass Species	Spring and Fall	Summer Stress Periods
Kentucky bluegrass	2.0" - 2.5"	2.5" - 3.0"
Perennial ryegrass	2.0" - 2.5"	2.5" - 3.0"
Fine Fescues	2.0" - 2.5"	2.5" - 3.0"
Tall Fescue	2.5"- 3.0"	2.5" - 3.0"



The "1/3 Mowing Rule" of blade removal.



"Don't Trash Grass"



The key word is "less"

...less fertilizer, less water, less work, and best of all, less waste! Recycling clippings back into the lawn requires less effort than disposing of them as waste. No one has to handle the clippings - not you, not your lawn care professional and not the waste management crew. You can reduce your mowing time by nearly 40 percent by not bagging, and spend less money on fertilizer and trash bags. And by not trashing grass, you'll be doing your part for the environment by reducing waste! If you follow these **"Don't Trash Grass"** mowing, fertilizing and watering guidelines, not only will you have a healthy lawn, but you'll never have to bag grass clippings again!

During summer months, 20-30 percent of residential wastes consist of grass clippings. Not only does this greatly increase the cost of waste disposal, but also packs landfills with valuable organic materials that are 100 percent recyclable. Grass clippings less than one inch in length filter down to the soil surface and decompose relatively quickly. Longer clippings have a tendency to remain above the lawn where they appear unsightly and can shade or smother the grass beneath. These clippings need to be removed to avoid both unsightliness and lawn damage.

Mowing

Regular mowing with a sharp mower is essential for reducing the need to collect clippings. It is important to mow often enough so that no more than one-third of the vertical grass height is removed with each cutting. For example, if the desired height is two inches, cut the grass when it is no more than three inches high. Removing only one-third of the green growth is particularly important when using a "mulching" or "recycler" type mower

Cutting the grass regularly will allow you to leave clippings on the lawn most or all of the time. Increasing the mowing height by 1/2 inch during the summer can improve the lawn's ability to tolerate stress. Mowing infrequently damages the lawn by removing too much of the plant at once. A substantial amount of stem tissue is removed, while proper mowing primarily removes leaves. Because of their toughness, stems left on the lawn will contribute to thatch accumulation. When mowed regularly, clippings filter down into the grass, decompose rapidly, and recycle nutrients back into the lawn. **Excessive watering** can lead to disease and other undesirable conditions. As with heavy applications of nitrogen early in the spring, this can weaken the lawn and diminish the benefit of applied fertilizers.

Mulching

For those who still want to bag your clippings then grass clippings can provide effective mulch around garden plants and between rows of flowers, vegetables, and small fruits. Mulching helps to reduce weeds, conserve moisture, and modify the soil temperature. However, care should be taken to avoid mulching too thickly. Excessive mulch can inhibit moisture and oxygen penetration into the soil, and may produce offensive odors.

Composting

Composting involves mixing grass clippings (as well as other plant materials) with soil to allow micro-organisms to decompose them. Clippings can be composted in the backyard, and requires aeration, moisture, and enough time to avoid foul odors. As additions to the compost pile, grass clippings are excellent because of their relatively high nitrogen content. They should not be the only compost component, however. Due to their tendency to mat, grass clippings are difficult to compost if they are layered too thickly.

In general, grass clippings should make up no more than one-half (by volume) of the material in the pile. Watch a compost pile containing a large proportion of grass and then turn it if the pile begins to compact or emit an odor. When you add grass clippings to an existing compost pile, turn them into the pile within 24 hours.

For more information on **Going Green Lawn Care**, contact your Public Works Dept., local nursery, local lawn maintenance contractors or visit the many sites on the internet.