

Refuse/Recycling

Grass Recycling

Did you know that a 1/2-acre lawn produces more than three tons--nearly 260 bags--of grass clippings each year? Think of all the time, money and effort it takes to bag all those clippings. Why go through all that hassle when it's not necessary?



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

It's simple. Grass clippings left on the lawn decompose and act as a natural organic fertilizer. This lets you reduce the amount of commercial fertilizer you need to apply. Your lawn will remain healthy and green because each time you mow, you will be returning valuable nutrients to the soil.

Mowing Techniques & Tips

- Any mower can recycle grass clippings. Just remove the grass catcher. Ask your lawn mower dealer if you need a special safety plug or adapter kit to convert your mower into a "recycling" mower. Installing a mulching blade also is helpful.
- Never cut off more than 1/3 of the grass blade in one mowing. Keep grass mowed to 2" in early spring, gradually raise the height to 3-4" by summer, then gradually reduce to 2" by late fall.
- Mow when the grass is dry.
- Keep your mower blade sharp. Dull mowers tear the grass blade, injure the plant and cause a brownish cast to the turf.
- If the grass gets too high, mow over the clippings a second time to further shred and scatter them.
- To prevent excess growth between mowings, raise the mower height, mow, then gradually lower it over a span of several mowings. This will help prevent shock to the plants.
- When it's time to replace your mower, consider a mulching, recycling or nonpolluting reel mower. All of them do a good job of shredding and scattering grass clippings.

What about thatch?

Thatch, a matted layer of dead roots and stems, usually is caused by too much water and fertilizer. Clippings don't produce thatch because they are 80 percent water and decompose quickly. A thatch layer of more than 1/2" should be removed.

Uses for clippings

- **COMPOST.** Fresh clippings should compose no more than 1/3 of the compost pile. They are an excellent source of nitrogen. Mix thoroughly with "brown" materials such as leaves or straw and turn the pile regularly to aerate it and prevent odors.
- **MULCH.** Pile about 1" of dried clippings on the soil to reduce weeds and moderate soil temperature. Mulching also controls erosion, run-off and evaporation. If using herbicides, wait at least two mowings after treating the lawn to use the clippings.
- **SOIL ADDITIVE.** Mixing fresh grass clippings into the garden improves soil texture, promotes moisture retention and adds nutrients and organic matter. About once a month, turn a 2" layer of grass into the soil to a depth of 6".