

# Here's How to Have Environmentally Friendly lawn the EEEEEasy way!!

## Introduction

Most of the time being environmentally friendly results in going out of your way to do something different or out of the norm (like recycling), but when it comes to your lawn, it turns out that the most environmentally friendly thing to do is also the easiest "**Leave it on the Lawn**"!!! Grass clippings that lay in the curb line ultimately go out to the Chesapeake Bay, grass clippings in bags go to the landfill, either way it's not a good thing for the environment. The best place for your grass is IN THE YARD! The article below from the New York Department of Environmental Conservation tells you how to do just that.

## Leave it on the Lawn Grass Recycling Lawn Care Waste Reduction Tips

*How do you dispose of grass clippings after mowing the lawn? Do you...*

- Put them in the garbage?
- Put them on the curb for collection?
- Compost them?

### Why not try to "Leave It On The Lawn!" It will:

- Benefit the environment.
- Improve your lawn.
- Save time.
- Save landfill space.

### Why You Should "Leave It On The Lawn."



*How do you dispose of grass clippings after mowing the lawn?*

*Benefits the environment by reducing the amount and frequency of fertilizer application.*

Grass clippings are 80% water and contain 2- 4% nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and other nutrients. This is also good for you (lower fertilizer costs).

*Improves your lawn.* Leaving grass clippings on the lawn returns nutrients to the soil resulting in healthier turf.

*Saves time.* Since the grass is no longer bagged, fewer stops are required.

*Reduces the amount of garbage you throw out.* Grass clippings can account for as much as 10% of the garbage we produce.

## **How To "Leave It On The Lawn"**

Allow your grass to grow to three inches and then cut no more than one inch off the top.

This is the "one-third" rule. This helps develop a deeper root system which is a natural defense against weeds, disease and drought.

During fast growing periods you may have to cut the grass every four to seven days

## **Common Questions**

*1. Do grass clippings cause thatch?*

No. Thatch is an accumulation of the "woody" parts of the grass plant: stems, roots and stolons, not the clippings. Thatch is most often caused by over-watering and over-fertilizing.

*2. Isn't it more work to mow the lawn often enough to keep the clippings short?*

No. Cutting grass before it is overgrown is easier and faster. Eliminating the time and effort it takes to bag clippings further shortens the mowing time.

### *3. What if my lawn grows too high between mowings to leave the clippings?*

You have several options. You may mow over the clippings to further shred and scatter them. You may raise the mower height so only the top third of the grass blade is removed and then gradually lower the mower height over the span of several mowings.

### *4. Do I need a mulching mower?*

No. Mulching blades and adaptor kits are available for many types of lawn mowers. When it is time to replace your mower, consider purchasing an electric mulching mower.

## **Other Useful Lawn Information**

- Watering your lawn is best done in the early morning. An inch of water per week is sufficient for good root growth.
- Fertilizing varies with soil types and growing conditions. The rule of thumb is 2 to 4 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn per year.
- Test the soil to determine your fertilizer need and remember to adjust the pH of the soil to between 6.5 and 7.2. This will improve the efficiency of the nutrients.

***Studies have shown that grass recycling reduces the need for fertilizer by 25%.***

## **For Your Information**

- 1/4 acre of lawn produces more than 1½ tons of clippings during the growing season!
- The overall time spent on lawn care decreases with the elimination of bagging, even when mowing increases to once every four to seven days!

## **Do You Compost Yard Debris?**

If you don't want to leave grass clippings on your lawn, try backyard composting.

Composting your organic wastes in the backyard is simple and beneficial. There are many methods to backyard composting ranging from a simple pile to a purchased composting bin.

For more information on "Leave It On The Lawn" or backyard composting contact: NYSDEC Bureau of Waste Reduction and Recycling 625 Broadway Albany, NY 12233-7253 (518) 402-8706 Or E-mail us at: [recycling@dec.ny.gov](mailto:recycling@dec.ny.gov) Or contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension Office.

## Grasscycling

### The Problems

- Grass clippings and other yard waste account for about 20% of municipal waste deposited in landfills.
- Collection, transport, and disposal of yard waste is costly.
- Bagging clippings removes valuable nutrients from soils.

### The Solutions

- Grasscycle: Leave grass clippings on the lawn after mowing. This reduces the time, costs, and labor of bagging cut grass and returns valuable nutrients to the soil. Grass clippings decompose quickly, so they do not contribute to thatch.
- Control growth rate: Reduce yard waste and have a healthier lawn by using the methods listed below.

### The Methods

- *Mowing Practices:* Mow weekly or bi-weekly during peak growing season. Remove no more than one-third of the leaf tissue with a sharp blade to allow clippings to break down rapidly. Although standard mowers do a fine job, mulching mowers chop grass into finer pieces for quicker breakdown. Some lawn mower manufacturers also offer "mulching kits" for standard mowers. When turf is overgrown (such as during rainy periods), large clumps of grass may form after mowing. These clumps can be removed and composted, used as mulch, or spread out on the lawn by removing.
- *Fertilizing:* Grasscycling reduces the need for chemical fertilizers. Too much fertilizer can weaken the lawn by causing a shallow root system to develop. When using fertilizers, apply small amounts only two or three times during the growing season (mid to late May and early to mid-September are best in this region).
- *Watering:* Water just enough to wet the root system. Too much water damages roots and may cause disease. Frequent but light watering may weaken the lawn by causing a shallow root system to develop.