

No Need To Bag Grass Clippings

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Most people want an attractive lawn and go to great lengths to get it done. Many people feel it necessary to bag the grass clippings to have an attractive landscape and with that comes the problem of how we dispose of them. Some people mulch with them and some compost them, however, many people send them to the landfill. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that yard waste accounts for 18% of the refuse that we historically have dumped into landfills, a figure that rises as high as 50% during the growing season. In recent years, dumping of grass clippings has become a problem because landfills are running out of space. If lawns are well maintained and mowed on schedule, this is one issue we can all help with.

One problem with off-site disposal is that we lose plant **organic matter** and the **nutrients** contained in the clippings. An environmentally sound option is the direct return of fresh clippings to the lawn. This is known as **Grasscycling**. This practice eliminates the need to haul grass clippings to a landfill.

Proper mowing practices and fertility are essential if this is to work well. If grass clippings are left in place, they must be cut small enough to filter through the turfgrass canopy and down into the soil region. Once this occurs, the clippings can decompose and become part of the continuing turf-soil nutrient cycle.

The following mowing practices will enhance your lawn's appearance and hardiness. Mow when the grass needs it! A guide is to mow often enough so that at any one mowing only **one third** of the leaf height is removed. **Remember take one third leave two thirds!** This will probably be every five to six days during the active growing season, and every 10 days or less when growth slows down if fertilizers are applied correctly.

Keep mower blades **sharp**. Dull blades rip and tear the turfgrass which promotes disease, causes the shredded leaves to appear tan and ragged, and results in weakened plants.

Mow when the grass is **dry**. Wet grass clings to the mower and clumps on the turf. Wet clippings also do not filter through the turf canopy to add nitrogen (N) as easily as dry clippings.

Recommended mowing heights for common turfgrass types in our area are as follows; Kentucky bluegrass – 1.5 to 2.5 inches and tall fescue – 2 to 3 inches. If you need more information, contact your local Extension office.