



GRASSCYCLING

What is it?

Grasscycling (sometimes called mulching) is the natural recycling of grass by leaving clippings on the lawn while mowing.

Why do it?

Grasscycling provides free fertilizer. Leaving grass clippings on your lawn can provide 15-20% of the lawn's fertilizer needs because grass clippings return nitrogen to the soil.

What about thatch buildup?

Grass clippings don't cause thatch. Grass clippings (if not too long) decompose rapidly and are 80-85% water.

Proper mowing

Mow regularly every 5 to 7 days. A basic rule of thumb is to remove only 1/3 of total grass height at one time. Prolonged rain may make it difficult to mow regularly. If you have to cut more than 1/3 of the grass blade in one mowing, bag the grass and add it to your compost bin. You can grass cycle with almost any lawn mower, simply by covering the chute where your collection bag sits. Several brands of mulching or recycling mowers are available and are very effective.

Guidelines for mowing heights

Generally in the summer you should cut your grass to a height of 2 to 2 ½ inches for lawns composed of Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, fine fescue, tall fescue, or a combination of these grasses. Leaving your lawn a little longer during hot weather can protect the grass roots and reduce drought and heat damage.

Mow with a sharp blade

Dull blades can give the lawn a ragged appearance and increase disease potential. Also, change mowing direction each time you mow.

When to water is important

Save water and money by watering your lawn in the early morning. The least amount of water will be lost to evaporation at that time. Avoid watering at night, especially if nearby plants stay wet overnight. An early morning watering schedule reduces disease problems and poor water distribution caused by wind.

Lawns need about one inch of water each week

Watering requirements vary according to weather conditions, soil type and turf health. For most lawns deep, infrequent watering is the key to good root development. Measure the amount of water your system provides in an hour by placing a small can (such as a tuna can) at various spots throughout the yard to catch the water. Adjust your watering times accordingly. Heavy clay soils require longer watering periods every 3 or 4 days, while sandy soils need to be watered more frequently but for shorter periods.

Water only when your lawn needs it

Check the depth of water penetration into the soil by inserting a trowel or soil probe. Water should extend at least 6 inches into the soil to promote deep, healthy root development. Overwatering promotes disease and excessive weak growth (and it wastes water!).

Fertilizing

Properly timed fertilization is essential for a healthy lawn. Grasscycling can provide the equivalent of at least one fertilizer application per year. 2 to 3 additional applications of a well-balanced fertilizer should be sufficient for a healthy lawn. Over-fertilization can weaken a lawn by promoting excessive top growth. An application of a slow release or organic fertilizer in the late fall is very important in our area.

Top-dressing turf areas with ½” of compost, especially after aerating, provides a slow release of nitrogen. It will also improve soil condition and water retention, thus promoting water conservation.