

# Mulch Mowing

## The easy way to a healthy lawn!



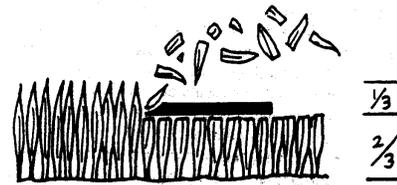
Mow it, bag it, haul it, throw it out. Taking care of the lawn has included those four steps for as long as most people can remember. But there's no need for all this hassle. Why not mulch mow? Mulch mowing means no more than just mowing and letting the clippings return to your lawn. It's easier, better for the lawn, less costly, and the best way to recycle yard waste. A win-win situation any way you look at it!

You don't need a special mulching mower to grasscycle, but you do need to follow some simple rules. Observe these easy instructions and you can recycle your grass clippings, fertilize your lawn, and save money.

### HERE'S HOW:

#### **MOWING HEIGHT AND FREQUENCY ARE KEY!**

- Cutting grass too short weakens it, makes it more susceptible to disease, and increases the chance for weed growth. You should never remove more than one-third of the blade surface at any one mowing. Removing more slows root growth and prevents clippings from settling to the soil.
- However, you don't want to allow the grass to grow too long. Mowing grass that has grown too tall is hard on the mower, takes longer to mow and produces "hay" that must be removed.
- In the summer it is important to raise the mowing height about half an inch. This reduces heat stress on the grass by providing shade to the lower portion of the plant. A higher mowing height increases the number and depth of roots, making the lawn healthier. Deep roots give your grass the capability to accumulate soil, water and nutrients.
- Base the mowing frequency on the growth rate of the grass. This may require mowing twice a week in the spring, every two weeks in the summer and once a week in the fall.



*Don't cut off more than one-third of the grass.*



*Sharp Mower Blade    Dull Mower Blade*



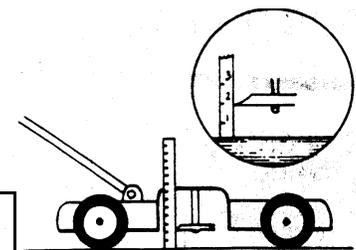
*Sharp blades cut cleaner, quicker, and require less energy.*

#### **RECOMMENDED MOWING HEIGHTS FOR KANSAS**

Bermudagrass	1-2 inches
Zoysiagrass	1-3 inches
Buffalograss	1½-3inches
Ryegrass	2-3 inches
Bluegrass	2-3 inches
Tall Fescue	2-3½ inches

#### **WHEN TO MOW**

Desired mowing height	Mow when grass is this tall
1 inch	1 ½ inches
1 ½ inches	2 ¼ inches
2 inches	3 inches
2 ½ inches	3 ¾ inches
3 inches	4 ½ inches
3 ½ inches	5 ¼ inches



*Check the cutting height on a sidewalk or driveway.*



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**Rule of Thumb: Grasscycling can replace one fertilizing application per year.**

## Mower choices...

Any mower can be used to return grass clippings to the lawn. However, consider a push or mulching mower thinking about purchasing a new mower. Today's manual push mowers are easy to use and conserve oil, reduce air pollution, and make less noise than their engine-powered counterparts. Push mowers are great for mulch mowing and provide healthy exercise. Mulching mowers are designed to recut grass clippings underneath the mower housing. This cuts the grass into smaller pieces, allowing them to sift down into the lawn and decompose more quickly. A similar effect can be achieved with traditional mowers by simply mowing more frequently and only cutting off a maximum of 1/3 of the leaf blade. Mulching mowers can also be used in the fall to shred leaves. No raking or bagging necessary!

## Questions and Answers:

Q: If I mulch mow, will I have to spend more time working on my lawn?

A: Probably not. You may have to mow your lawn more frequently, but studies have shown that mulch mowing can actually reduce the amount of time spent on lawn care overall. How? No raking or struggling with the grasscatcher! Plus, mulch mowing can reduce the need for fertilizing by at least 25%. Some people who mulch mow don't use commercial fertilizer at all.

Q: Does mulch mowing help the community?

A: By handling your yard trimmings at home, you help your community by keeping the costs the public must pay to collect and process these materials low.

## Thatch? Not a problem

Many people mistakenly believe that mulch mowing will create unsightly thatch on the lawn. Not so. Thatch is a spongy layer of stems and root material that decomposes slowly. Grass clippings, on the other hand, are 85 to 90% water and decompose rapidly. So remember, grass clippings do not contribute significantly to thatch accumulation on lawns. In fact, grass clippings will provide valuable nutrients as they decompose into the soil - if you mow regularly at the proper mowing height.

Q: I missed mowing my lawn at the proper height and would like to rake/bag my clippings this time. What should I do with them?

A: You could add the clippings to your compost pile. If the clippings smell, stir them deeper into your "browns" (carbon-rich items like leaves or wood parts). Or, in Lawrence you may set your clippings out year-round for weekly pickup the same day as your trash collection and we will compost it. Materials should be set out in a City yard waste cart (NO recycling carts) or compostable paper yard waste bag the night before or by 6:00 a.m. on your collection day.

Q: My grass clippings are just clumping up instead of sifting into the lawn.

A: Mow the lawn when it is less moist and consider sharpening your blade. You can also wait until the clippings dry and then run over them again with the mower.

## For more information, visit

Sections of this fact sheet were reproduced with permission from Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services Solid Waste Management District 1632 Central Parkway Cincinnati, OH 45210, other portions taken from the Kansas State University Cooperative Extension Service Horticulture Report "Mowing Your Lawn" and the King County Grasscycling brochure.

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