

Doing your part

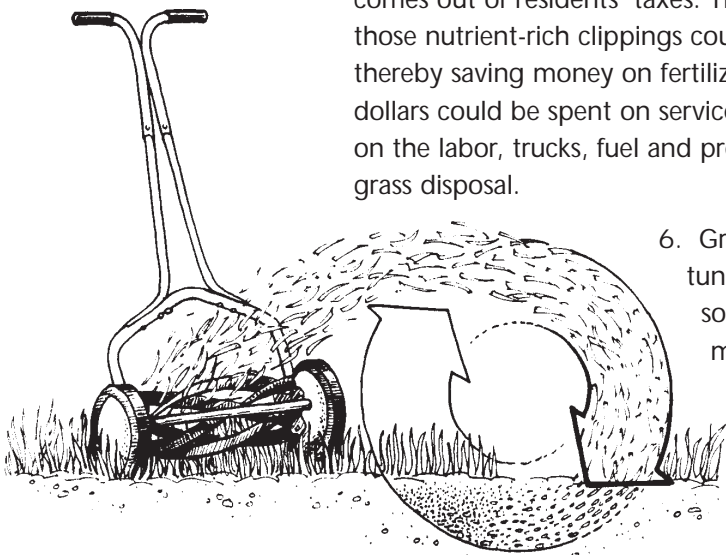
Six good reasons to grasscycle



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Grasscycling is the process of recycling grass clippings by leaving them on your lawn.

Grasscycling saves time, reduces waste and leads to a deeper, healthier root system that increases your lawn's resistance to disease, drought and insects.
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1. Grasscycling improves lawn quality. When grass clippings are allowed to decay naturally on the lawn, they release valuable nutrients, add water-saving mulch and encourage natural soil aeration by earthworms.
2. Grasscycling saves time and work. A recent study in the United States found that 147 homeowners who quit bagging their clippings saved an average of 35 minutes per mowing. That's an average of seven hours per season ... or a day at the beach.
3. All lawn mowers can grasscycle. No special mower is necessary. For best results, keep the mower blade sharp and mow only when the grass is dry.
4. Grass clippings are a free, high-nitrogen fertilizer. When clippings decompose, they release their nutrients back to the lawn. They contain nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus, as well as lesser amounts of other essential plant nutrients. When left on the lawn, clippings are rapidly broken down into these nutrients, which are returned to the lawn. There's no polluting run-off, no use of non-renewable resources and no damage to soil organisms or wildlife.
5. Grasscycling means there's no need to spend tax dollars on land-filling grass. The cost of trucking grass clippings to landfill sites comes out of residents' taxes. This is a wasteful practice – all those nutrient-rich clippings could be fertilizing people's lawns, thereby saving money on fertilizers and water bills. And tax dollars could be spent on services and programs rather than on the labor, trucks, fuel and precious landfill space used in grass disposal.
6. Grasscycling is a simple, easy opportunity for every homeowner to do something good for the environment. Grasscycling is a responsible environmental practice and an opportunity for all homeowners to reduce their waste. And the best part is, it takes less time and energy than bagging and dragging that grass to the curb.



Grasscycling

Rules of thumb

Don't cut more than one third of the grass blade.

Cut regularly. If the grass is long, cut off short amounts in several mowings rather than all at once. Cutting too short and not often enough are common errors of lawn care.

Use any kind of mower, but make sure it has a sharp blade.

Mow only when the grass is dry.

Never mow during a drought.

Prevent excessive grass growth by watering (and fertilizing) in moderation.

Myths about grasscycling

Myth #1

Leaving grass clippings on the lawn causes thatch.

Facts:

Clippings and thatch are simply not connected. Thatch results from the abnormally fast growth of roots and other plant tissues and is caused by improper fertilizing and watering. Grass clippings left on the lawn decay quickly and release valuable nutrients back to established grass.

Myth #2

Grasscycling is messy.

Facts:

Grass clippings decay quickly and disappear within a day or two. If you're worried about people tracking grass into your home or pool, try mowing late in the day so that clippings have time to dry and settle overnight.

Myth #3

Grass clippings damage lawns.

Facts:

Mowing regularly and at the proper height improves your lawn. If you allow the grass to grow too long between cuttings, the thick patches of mowed clippings will suffocate

your lawn in those areas. This problem can be minimized by gradually reducing your lawn to its proper height over a period of two or three mowings, rather than scalping it back to that height in one mowing. A good rule of thumb is: Never remove more than one third of the leaf surface at any one time.

Myth #4

Grasscycling spreads diseases.

Facts:

The spores that cause grass diseases are present whether clippings are collected or not. Watering properly, only when needed (one inch of water every five to six days, in early morning) and keeping your mower blade very sharp for clean cutting will help your lawn resist disease.

For more information, please contact:

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Grass clippings in your compost

Grass clippings are a valuable addition to your compost. Don't add too many at once though; they tend to mat and can become smelly. Instead, add them in thin layers and allow them to dry in the sun before adding them.

This fact sheet has been adapted from The Composters' Journal, a quarterly publication from the Recycling Council of Ontario, and from a City of Waterloo brochure.

