

Mulch

- If you need or want to collect your grass clippings, recycle them as a mulch in the garden or in planting beds. Mulching reduces weed problems, modifies soil temperature, and retains moisture. Mulch also helps maintain good soil structure and minimizes erosion by protecting the soil surface.
- However, avoid mulching with grass that's been treated with weedkillers. These could harm your desirable plants. Be particularly cautious when a long lasting herbicide called dicamba (Banvel) has been used. Chemically treated clippings should be left on the lawn or in your compost bin where herbicides other than dicamba will break down in about 6 weeks. Do not compost clippings from lawns treated with dicamba. Leave them on the lawn.

Mowers

- Various types of mowers are available on the market and each has its own advantages and disadvantages. Rotary mowers are most commonly used and many can be operated with or without a bagging attachment. Bagging mowers may or may not require the bag to be attached. Kits are available that will convert some bagging mowers into mulching mowers.
- Mulching mowers, a type of rotary mower, finely chop clippings allowing faster breakdown on your lawn. Push or reel mowers are quiet to operate, easy to maintain, and require no gasoline. They are a good choice for a small lawn.
- Regardless of mower type, the key to a quality cut is keeping the mower blade sharp and properly adjusted. Dull mowers use more gasoline, give the lawn an undesirable frayed appearance, and can allow leaf diseases to get started. Mower blades require sharpening at least every second mowing season for bluegrass lawns; and at least once per year for tall fescue or perennial ryegrass lawns.
- Avoid mowing when the grass is wet as this produces clumps that smother the lawn and clog the mower. Always be careful to keep hands and feet away from the cutting blades of any mower.

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E.A.S.Y.* LAWN MOWING

(*Environmental Action Starts
in your Yard)

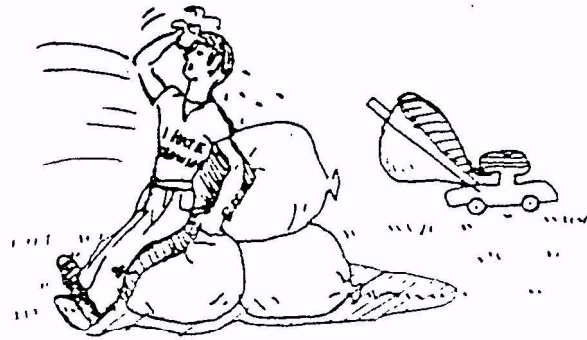
1. Mow
~~2. Bag~~
~~3. Haul~~

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Leave grass clippings on the lawn to
improve your grass save time and
protect the environment

Why quit bagging grass clippings?

Some questions and answers.



Q. Bagging is needed for a quality lawn, right?

A. No. A lot of people with great looking lawns mow and don't catch clippings. In fact, lawn researchers have proven that clippings left on lawns result in a healthier lawn that is generally less prone to disease. Clippings also contain organic fertilizer nutrients that are returned to the lawn if clippings are not picked up.

Q. But clippings cause thatch, don't they?

A. Grass clippings break down quickly and don't turn into thatch. The brown, spongy material that we call thatch starts with thick grass stems and roots. When these hardened grass parts die naturally, they break down slowly and can accumulate as a thatch layer. Your best defense against thatch is to regularly core cultivate your lawn. Providing air to grass roots through core aeration, and fertilizer nutrients by returning grass clippings, greatly contribute to growing a healthy lawn.

Q. My lawn is healthy and I bag my clippings. Why shouldn't I continue bagging?

A. If you compost your grass clippings and then use the compost in your garden, this is fine. However, putting grass clippings in the trash causes several problems. Bags of grass clippings take up a whopping 25%* of the space in trash hauling trucks and a lot more room in landfills. Many landfills across the country are rapidly running out of room. In addition to spending local tax money to haul and dump clippings, grass clippings cause more problems once they are in the landfill. They compact easily, which prevents aerobic composting. Instead, breakdown without oxygen produces explosive methane gas which is a hazard to landfill workers. Clippings left on the lawn will avoid all these problems. Good lawns stay healthy when clippings are left on them and poor lawns get better!

Q. I'm not sure that my lawn mower will operate without the bag. How can I tell?

A. Consult the manual that came with your mower or ask your mower dealer. Some mowers can operate safely with or without the bag. Others can be converted to no bag operation with a kit available from your dealer. See the back panel for more information on mowers.

*An estimate for the grass growing months of June through September

Mowing Facts

- Lawns are most healthy when mowed at 2½-to-3 inches, leaving the clippings on the lawn. Mowing heights may be lowered to 1½ inches in the fall to avoid grass matting over the winter.
- Mow frequently so no more than 1/3 of the grass blade is removed. This may mean mowing every 5 days instead of waiting a full week. Note that studies show it takes less overall time to mow more often and leave clippings, than mowing weekly and bagging clippings. If grass does become excessively long in between mowings, bagging or raking to avoid surface matting of clippings on the lawn will be necessary.
- Apply most of your fertilizer in the fall — from late September to early November — but at least 2 to 3 weeks before the ground freezes and while the grass is still green. Late season fertilization favors root and not top growth, provides a greener fall and winter lawn, and allows your lawn to green up earlier in the spring. Fertilizing in the fall avoids a lot of

the mowing chores brought on by spring fertilization while still giving you the same benefits. Even a moderate application of fertilizer in the spring means more frequent mowing — up to twice per week — and can produce a weak, poorly rooted turf. Use only light amounts of fertilizer in the spring and summer; or better yet, consider the use of a slow release fertilizer that gradually makes nutrients available to the grass.

- Treat your lawn with pesticides, particularly fungicides, only when necessary. Use of many common pesticides kills beneficial earthworms and microorganisms that break down clippings and digest the dead stems and roots that cause thatch.
- In addition to proper mowing, regular watering, fertilizing, and core aerating are key to growing a quality lawn. For more information on lawns, ask your Colorado State University Cooperative Extension office for the fact sheet titled "Lawn Care."

Grass Clippings Belong on the Lawn Because:

- Nitrogen and other nutrients in the clippings are recycled into the lawn, reducing fertilizer bills and the potential for nitrogen surface water contamination.
- Clippings breakdown quickly and encourage beneficial earthworms and microorganisms that maintain healthy grass and healthy soil.
- Clippings on the lawn mean no bagging and hauling, and more time to enjoy the lawn and pursue other recreational activities.
- Eliminating plastic bags of grass clippings means 25% less trash for City workers to haul, which is a cost savings.
- Cutting 25% of the trash volume preserves landfill space.