

The Eight Most Commonly Asked Questions About Grass Clippings

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Why are homeowners being asked not to send grass clippings to landfills?

During summer months, grass clippings may constitute as much as 50% of the household waste sent to landfills. This packs landfills with valuable organic materials.

Don't grass clippings that are left on a lawn cause thatch?

No. A thatch layer will develop if organic matter is produced faster than it is decomposed by microorganisms. However, finely-chopped grass clippings decompose rapidly and do not contribute thatch.

How does lawn fertilizing affect clipping production?

Early spring fertilization, especially with high rates of nitrogen, results in rapid growth. If mowing cannot keep up with the growth rate, clippings may have to be collected until growth slows. Fertilizer products containing slow-release nitrogen will provide a more moderate, uniform grass growth rate. (Examples include sulfur-coated urea, urea formaldehyde, IBDU, or natural organic fertilizers).

How do mowing practices affect the need to collect clippings?

Regular mowing with a sharp mower blade is essential to maintaining a healthy, beautiful lawn. Mow often enough so that no more than one-third (about 1 inch) of the vertical grass height is removed with each cutting.

Can bagging attachments be removed so clippings are no longer collected?

Yes, but a mower designed primarily as a bagging mower will generally excel at collecting clippings; its performance, when converted to a mulching mower, can be compromised.

Are some mowers more effective than others?

Yes. Tests show that the new Toro Recycler brand mowers do a more complete and consistent job of cutting and recutting grass blades into finely-chopped clippings. This means the clippings are deposited into the grass (hidden out-of-sight) and decomposition occurs faster. The resulting healthy, beautiful lawn also requires less effort to maintain.

What benefits do grass clippings provide if left on the lawn?

Finely-cut clippings provide three significant benefits. First, they shade the soil surface and reduce moisture loss due to evaporation. Second, they are a valuable source of plant nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. And third, finely-cut clippings and their residue help cool the soil and maintain a uniform temperature.

Are there any situations where lawn clippings should be collected?

Yes, there are a few instances when it may be desirable to collect clippings:

- *If the lawn must be mowed when wet.
- *If the grass is so tall the clippings may not be distributed evenly.
- *If the mower is unsafe to operate without a bagging attachment.