

Keeping your lawn healthy and well groomed

Lawn mowing, although often overlooked, greatly effects your lawns appearance and general health.

Annual lawn mower tune-ups

According to Briggs & Stratton, nearly 70% of Americans say they are willing to do more to help the environment, but not knowing *what* to do is among the top obstacles to their taking action, according to a recent survey conducted by Briggs & Stratton Corporation, the world's largest maker of gasoline-powered engines for outdoor power equipment.

In response to this survey, Briggs & Stratton developed a lawn mower tune-up campaign. They determined that a gasoline powered lawn mower can reduce its emissions by as much as 50 percent over an untuned engine. Not only that, but it can also save fuel and prolong the life of the mower-- all with a simple lawn mower tune-up each spring.

Mowing tips:

- Mow header strips at the ends of the lawn and around flower beds first. Make them wide enough that you can turn the mower around in the already mown section. Then mow back and forth between these header strips overlapping each lap by about 1/8 the width of the mower's deck.
- Don't cut your grass too short, particular for cool season grasses. Higher heights usually provide for a deeper root system, looks better, and is less likely to have weeds invading, particularly crabgrass.
- Don't remove any more than one third of the grass leaf at any one cutting. If circumstances arise that a lawn gets too tall and you just have to lop off a bunch to get caught up, bite the bullet and break it down into several mowings to get caught up with 3 or so days between cuttings.
- NEVER SCALP YOUR LAWN. Scalping severely damages the root system to such a degree that it may die.
- Avoid mowing when the grass is wet or when it's dark

- Avoid throwing grass clippings into the street and driveway where they can be washed into the sewer system. After mowing, clean up driveway and walkways.
- When mowing remove only 1/3 with each cutting (except for the first mowing of the season when it's ok to remove more). You can safely leave clippings that will quickly decompose and add nutrients back into the soil. Contrary to popular opinion, grass clippings do not add to thatch buildup. Grass blades are made up of about 75% water.
- Mow your lawn in a different direction with each mowing, especially with lawns of shorter grass types. Altering the direction ensures a more even cut since grass blades will grow more erect and less likely to develop into a set pattern.
- Keep your mower's blade sharp, which means having it sharpened several times during the mowing season. Keep several blades around so you'll always have a sharp one on hand. Sharp blades cut the grass cleanly and help mulch clippings into small pieces which break down quickly.
- Don't forget to change your mower's oil at least once during the mowing season. For brand new mowers, change the oil after about 5 hours of operation during the initial break-in period.
- At the end of the mowing season use a fuel stabilizer in the remaining gasoline
- In the spring, don't use that old gas unless you properly used a fuel stabilizer, it can cause a number of problems. Better to use fresh gasoline to begin the new mowing season.



- **Leaf blade A** demonstrates what a leaf blade should look like after mowing with a sharp blade.
- **Leaf blade B** demonstrates a leaf blade that was injured by a dull mower blade.

- **Leaf blade C** was cut by the mower but indicates that the mower blade is not sharp enough. The shredded white tissue protruding from the leaf blades C and D is the vascular tissue of the plant.
- **Leaf blade D** has been mown for quite some time with a dull mower blade.

To bag or mulch?

Grass clippings do not contribute to thatch buildup or increase the chances of disease. If you mow your lawn at the right height, without removing any more than 1/3 of its total height, clippings will quickly breakdown without a trace. These clippings contribute additional nitrogen and other nutrients to the soil and supply it with additional organic materials. Clippings from a 1000 sq. ft. lawn can add as much as 1 - 2 pounds of nitrogen back into the soil.

If you have a compost pile, then you may want to bag your clippings occasionally to add much needed green-matter to the compost pile. Make sure it is mixed thoroughly with brown matter to avoid a strong ammonia odor. **DO NOT COMPOST CLIPPINGS** after applying any weed control or weed-feed type product. Before adding clippings to the compost pile wait at least 3 mowings after these products have been applied. TLS.