



# Don't rake it and don't bag it!

According to turf experts, grass clippings should be left on the lawn to:

- reduce water evaporation
- reduce lawn wear by creating a cushioning layer
- facilitate better growth by providing nutrients and keeping the soil temperature cooler

## Mowing tips to ensure a healthy lawn



- Keep your mower blade sharp.
- Cut when grass is dry.
- Set your mower to cut at the proper height.
- Mow often enough so you never remove more than 1/3 of the lawn height in each cutting. You may have to mow every five days when your lawn is growing fast, but once every seven to ten days may be sufficient when turf is growing slowly.

The information in this brochure was made available by

### Cornell Cooperative Extension of Nassau County

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# GRASS RECYCLING

## Don't Rake It... Don't Bag It!

The Department of  
Environmental Resources  
Recycling Outreach Division  
**(516) 677-5853**

[www.OysterBayTown.com](http://www.OysterBayTown.com)

# How to recycle your lawn

## **Mow when your grass is dry and 3 to 3 1/2 inches tall**

Never cut grass shorter than 2 to 2 1/2 inches. This will permit your lawn to develop a larger and deeper root system and a stronger defense against weeds, diseases and droughts.

## **Use a sharp mower blade (mulching mower if you have one)**

A sharp blade and frequent mowing will mean finer clippings that will decompose on your lawn quickly. Mulching mower conversion kits are available.

## **Remove excessive thatch before leaving your clippings on the lawn**

Although 1/2 to 1 inch of thatch is no problem, a thicker layer will keep clippings and their nutrients from reaching the soil.

## **Don't bag grass clippings!**

If you have trouble using your mower without the bagger, call your dealer for assistance.

# Facts about grass recycling

- You can save 1/3 of your annual lawn care time by mowing frequently and not collecting clippings.
- Frequent mowing or using a mulching mower produces short clippings that rapidly disappear (*decompose into the soil*).
- Contrary to what some people think, thatch is not made up of grass blades, but of roots, leaf sheaths and rhizomes that decompose slowly.
- Grass clippings decompose rapidly, returning nutrients to the soil that make lawns more vigorous and durable.
- Every garbage bag of grass clippings wastes up to 1/4 pound of usable organic nitrogen.
- You can reduce your fertilization costs and protect our water supply from pollutants by recycling clippings back into your lawn.
- Yard waste comprises 22% of our residential waste and mulching saves taxpayers money by reducing disposal costs.

## **Avoid over-fertilizing your lawn**

Fertilize the lawn in May and October. Nassau County law prohibits lawn fertilizing November 15 to April 1.

## **Limit the use of lawn chemicals**

Save money by allowing soil organisms to return nutrients to the soil. Diagnose lawn problems and apply corrective measures only when needed.

## **Switch to disease resistant seed varieties**

This will help maintain a healthier turf.

## **Mulch with a 2 to 4 inch grass layer in your garden bed**

Water evaporation will be reduced, weeds will be eliminated and the soil will be enriched.

## **Compost grass clippings with last fall's leaves**

This will enhance your compost mixture and produce a good soil additive.

# Grass recycling is not an all-or-nothing proposition

You may choose to collect your clippings every third time you mow...or every other time. You're still achieving a savings for yourself and the environment.

If you collect your clippings occasionally, recycle them as a mulch in the garden or in planting beds. Mulching adds nutrients, reduces weed problems and modifies soil temperature and moisture.

Mulch also helps maintain good soil structure and minimizes erosion by protecting the soil surface. Clippings decompose rapidly, so use them often as mulch.

Avoid mulching with grass that has been recently treated with herbicides that can harm your plants. Chemically treated clippings should be left on the lawn or composted where herbicides will break down. Use as a mulch only after three mowings following herbicide application.

If you can't use grass clippings in your own yard, find a neighbor who can!

