



## Grasscycling Info Sheet

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### **What is Grasscycling?**

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

### **Why should I grasscycle?**

#### **Grasscycling saves time...**

By not having to bag your grass clippings and take them to the centralized composting facility you will save time each time you mow. Some studies show that the average homeowner who grasscycles saves over ½ hour every time they mow. Now that could really add up!!

#### **Grass clippings are good for your lawn...**

Grass clippings provide you with a free fertilizer. They contain nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus as well as lesser amounts of other essential plant nutrients. They can provide 25% of the fertilizer your lawn needs. When the clippings decompose, they release their nutrients back to the lawn. There's no polluting run-off, no use of non-renewable resources, and no damage to soil organisms or wildlife. The clippings also add a water-saving mulch, and encourage natural soil aeration by earthworms.

#### **It is good for the environment...**

Grasscycling is a simple, easy opportunity for every homeowner to do something good for the environment. It is a responsible environmental practice and an opportunity for all homeowners to reduce their waste.

## **How do I grasscycle?**

Grasscycling is easy. Instead of collecting your clippings in the bag attached to your lawn mower, simply let the grass clippings remain on the lawn.

### **Expert Tips**

To be effective and prevent a buildup of clippings follow these simple guidelines:

- Don't cut more than one third of the grass blade at a time
- Keep your grass longer than 6-8 cm (2½ - 3") - this will help shade the soil, decrease moisture evaporation, and discourage weed seeds from sprouting
- Cut regularly
- If the grass has grown a lot since its last mowing, mow it down in 2 or 3 stages - the grass clippings will not be too long and it will give them time to breakdown in between mowings
- Only mow the grass when it is dry
- Keep your mower blades sharp for a clean cut
- Prevent excessive grass growth by watering and fertilizing in moderation

## **Common Questions and Concerns about Grasscycling**

### **Will leaving my clippings on the lawn cause thatch?**

No. This is a common myth about grasscycling. Thatch is actually caused by abnormally fast growth of roots by improper fertilizing and watering, not by clippings left on the lawn. When it comes to thatch the best way to deal with it is prevention by watering and fertilizing properly.

### **Does Grasscycling spread diseases?**

No. The spores that cause grass diseases are present whether clippings are collected or not. Watering properly, and only when needed, and keeping your mower blade very sharp will help your lawn resist disease.

### **Will the clippings damage my lawn?**

No, in fact leaving the grass clippings on your lawn is actually good for it. The clippings help return valuable nutrients to the soil.

## **Additional Tips for a Healthy Lawn**

### **Watering**

Watering thoroughly is much better for your lawn than more frequent shallow waterings. It is best to water to a depth of 10-15 cm (4-6") which requires about 2-3 (1") of water at one time. Watering in this manner will encourage deep root growth, which will make your lawn more resistant to drought and to diseases.

To find out how long it takes your sprinkler to give your grass this much water, place a shallow can (for example a cat food or tuna can) out on your lawn the next time you water. The length of time it takes for the can to fill up to 2-3 cm (1") deep is the length of time you need to water each area of your lawn.

It is best to water in the early morning. Watering in the heat of the day will only mean that most of the water is evaporated. Watering in the evening may mean that the grass will stay damp all night which can lead to disease.

### **Fertilizing**

Compost makes a great free and natural fertilizer for your lawn. You can use it in a "compost tea" (equal parts of compost and water, or compost tied in a burlap bag soaked in water). If you screen your finished compost, it can be added directly to your lawn.

If you choose to use a commercial fertilizer it is best to use a natural or slow release fertilizer on your lawn. Add it 3 or 4 times a year instead of all at once (each time only add about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the recommended allowance).

Excessive fertilization only means extra mowing and a lawn that is susceptible to disease and pests.