

# Grass – Cut it and Leave It



## Save Time & Money

You'll save 20-25% of your time by not having to stop and empty your lawnmower bag, and you'll avoid hauling them to another location. You'll reduce the need to fertilize (25 – 50% less), since clippings return nutrients to the soil.

Grass clippings are a major part of New Jersey's municipal solid waste stream. Reduce waste at the source. Leave the grass clippings on your lawn when you mow, and let nature do the recycling.



Warren Township

46 Mountain Boulevard, Warren, NJ 07059  
Warrennj.org or Facebook.com/warregreenteam



# Maintain Proper Lawn Height

To maintain your lawn properly, mow high and mow often, so that you only take off about 1/3 of the length of the grass. This will result in an attractive, neatly trimmed lawn, and clippings will disappear when they filter down to the soil. Most New Jersey lawns should be mowed 2 ½ - 3 ½" high, especially in summer, to shade the soil, cool the roots, and block weed growth. Mulching mowers help to do this; they chop the clippings into fine pieces that slip easily down to the soil. Many new mowers are mulching mowers, and you can attach mulching equipment to your existing mower.

## Clippings don't cause Thatch

Controlling watering rates will help your lawn grow at manageable levels until the lawn is dry. If it turns blue-green or gray, or if footprints don't spring back, it's time to water. Provide about an inch at a time for clay soil, and half an inch for sandy soil. Place a few cans around the lawn and note how long it takes for that much water to collect. Even in dry periods, lawns usually need a thorough watering only once a week, or twice if soils are sandy. If managed carefully, water will soak the soil four to six inches down, just right for building healthy root systems and greener growth. Early morning watering conserves water by preventing evaporation.

New Jersey soils can be improved by adding organic matter. Added organic materials such as grass clippings help make the clay soils in our area more productive.

If you compost large amounts of grass, turn the pile often with a pitchfork to avoid odors.

Clippings don't cause thatch. Thatch is formed from the accumulation of dead roots and stems. The more you fertilize and water your lawn, the more it grows and the faster thatch accumulates. Many people apply too many lawn products, too often. It costs money and may harm the lawn.

When you cut it and leave it, the nitrogen from the grass clippings will add one to two pounds of nitrogen a year to each thousand square feet of lawn., reducing the need to fertilize as often.

During the growing season (April – October), a 5,000 square foot lawn will produce one ton (2,000 pounds) of grass clippings. Just cutting it and leaving it will divert a large amount of waste diverted from the solid waste stream.

For more information, contact:

Somerset County Cooperative  
Extension

Phone: 908-526-6293

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