

Too much herbicide can burn the lawn, kill nearby plants and contaminate waterways.

If your lawn has only a few weeds, try a one-time pre-emergent weed killer and spot application rather than repeated whole lawn applications of weed killers.

If you see signs of insect damage, consult with the County Extension Office to determine what you need to do before you select an insecticide.

Other Lawn ADDITIVES

Many people apply too many lawn products, too often. This costs money and may harm the lawn. Better to evaluate problems (your lawn service can help) and apply only what you need. The County Extension Office can also help.

What to do with EXCESSIVE GROWTH

If you miss a week, or if heavy rain causes fast growth, you have some choices.

Double mow. Set the mower higher than usual and cut no more than the top third of the grass. In a day or two, set the mower height down and bring the lawn down another $\frac{1}{3}$ of its height. Continue this process until you reach the desired height.

Mulch heavy clippings into the garden.

Bag or rake the clippings and apply them to your garden as mulch. Spread them an inch deep — to cool the soil, retain water, prevent erosion and compaction, and smother weed seeds.

Compost. Grass speeds up your composting, but can cause odors and deplete oxygen if not properly managed. If you compost large amounts of grass, turn the pile often with a pitchfork. If you contract with a lawn service, ask if their services include installing and managing composting systems.

So Now You KNOW...

You can achieve the lawn you want and protect our environment, when you practice careful turf management, and...

CUT IT AND LEAVE IT!

To Learn More:

- US EPA “Greenscaping Your Lawn and Garden: <http://www.epa.gov/wastes/education/pdfs/home-gs.pdf>
- NJDEP Healthy Lawns Healthy Water: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/healthylawns/healthywater/>
- Cooperative Extension of Morris County: <http://morris.njaes.rutgers.edu>
- Borough of Madison: www.rosenet.org
- Sustainable Madison: sustainablemadisonnj.org

This Brochure Prepared by
Sustainable Madison Advisory Committee
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Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste
Bureau of Recycling and Planning

GRASS

**Cut it ...
Leave It ...**



**Why Environmentally-Friendly
Lawn Care Makes Sense for**

**Your Lawn
and
Our Town**

Brought to You by
Sustainable Madison

SustainableMadisonNJ.org

Leave the grass clippings on your lawn when you mow...to return nutrients to the soil and reduce waste.

Grass clippings are a major part of New Jersey's municipal solid waste stream. As a Madison resident, you help to avoid air pollution and wasted resources by recycling many items. You can do more by embracing **grasscycling**...reducing waste at the source.

If you use a lawn service, share this brochure with them. Leaving clippings on your lawn means less for them to cart away!

Just CUT IT and LEAVE IT to save time and money.

You can save 20-25% of your time because you won't have to stop and empty your lawnmower bag or fill waste containers and haul them to the curb.

You'll need to fertilize less (25-50%) since the clippings return nutrients to the soil.

MOW your lawn CORRECTLY.

The trick is to mow high and often so that the grass clippings are short. Clippings are 80-85% water, contain valuable nutrients and decompose quickly, disappearing when they filter down to the soil.

Do not remove more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the length of the grass. The result will be an attractive, neatly trimmed lawn.

Most lawns in this area should be mowed 2½-3½ inches high (like the rough beside a golf course fairway)...especially important in summer, because this helps to shade the

soil, cool the roots, and block weed growth. Mulching mowers help by chopping the clippings into fine pieces that slip easily down to the soil. Most new mowers are mulching mowers; you can attach mulching equipment to your existing mower.

The RIGHT amount of WATER

Controlling watering rates will help your lawn grow at manageable levels and still be healthy.

- Don't water until the lawn is dry and take note of conservation measures that may be in effect, such as odd-even watering.
- If the lawn 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 cans around the lawn and note how long it takes for that much water to collect.
- Under most conditions a thorough lawn watering 1-2 times a week is sufficient (sandy soils may need it more frequently). If managed carefully, water will soak the soil 4-6 inches down, just right for building healthy root systems and greener growth.
- Early morning watering conserves water by preventing evaporation.

What about THATCH?

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. Deep, infrequent irrigation minimizes thatch accumulation. Note: Some species of turf grass are more prone to thatch accumulation.

FERTILIZER

Fertilizing in spring generally is not necessary if lawns have been properly fertilized in the fall; it can weaken a lawn by causing excessive top growth.

Don't fertilize in summer unless needed; too much can kill cool-season grasses such as fescues.

Fertilize in September and again in October or early November for a healthier lawn. This keeps lawns greener through the winter and strengthens roots for thick growth in spring without the unwanted long growth caused by spring fertilization. This means fewer mowings, fewer clippings, and less work.

The NJ Fertilizer Law **bans** any fertilization between November 15 and March 1. After March 1, **only certified lawn professionals** can apply phosphorus-containing lawn fertilizers. All fertilizers sold over the counter will have 0% phosphorus and contain at least 20% slow release nitrogen. Phosphorus can be used in certain cases, such as during establishment of turf or vegetation or if a soil test indicates need.

Herbicides and Insecticides

Herbicides remain on the grass for some time, and some make the clippings unsuitable for mulch, so it's important to "cut it and leave it" when you use weed killers.