

Grass – Just Cut it and Leave it



Grass clippings are a major part of New Jersey’s municipal solid waste stream. As a New Jersey resident, you can do more by reducing waste at the source! Leave the grass clippings on your lawn when you mow, and let nature do the recycling.

Just cut it and leave it to save time and money! Here are some tips to help yourself, and the environment.

- By leaving grass clippings you will save 20-25% of your time because you will not have to stop and empty your lawnmower bag, and you will avoid purchasing yard waste bags and hauling them to the curb.
- You will need to fertilize less (25-50%) or not at all, since clippings return nutrients to the soil.
- Mow high 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.
- Leaving the setting higher on your mower will shade the soil, cool the roots, and block weed growth.
- Most new mowers are mulching mowers, and you can attach mulching equipment to your existing mower, if needed.
- Controlling watering rates will help your lawn grow at manageable levels and still stay healthy.
- Early morning watering conserves water by preventing evaporation.
- If you do not want to leave your grass clippings, consider composting them instead of throwing them away. Be sure to turn the pile often with a pitchfork.
- Too much fertilizer means rapid growth and more mowing. Use soil testing to verify the need for fertilizer. See your County Extension for a soil test kit.
- Lawn additives are powerful chemicals, and you should use them carefully and correctly.
- When you cut your lawn and leave the clippings, the nitrogen from the grass clippings will add one to two pounds of nitrogen a year to each thousand square feet of lawn. If you are set on fertilizing your lawn you can adjust the spreader setting to about ½ to ¾ of the manufacturer’s recommended setting.
- Too much herbicide can burn the lawn, kill nearby plants, and contaminate waterways. Instead of repeated whole lawn application of weed killers, try a one-time pre-emergent weed killer and spot application if your lawn has only a few weeds.
- Remember – some “weeds” can be beautiful plants that host lots of beneficial species.
- For less mowing, consider removing some areas of grass and planting them with native plant species that can benefit pollinators or other wildlife.
- Any lawn additive you put on your grass can eventually end up in a local waterway.

