

Mowing Techniques & Tips

- **Any mower can recycle grass clippings.** Simply remove the grass catcher! Ask your lawn mower dealer if a special safety plug or adapter kit is needed to convert your mower into a “recycling” mower. You can also have a mulching blade installed.
- **Keep your grass mowed to 2” - 3” tall.**
- **Do not remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade in any single mowing.** For example, if your lawn is kept at 2” tall, it should not be allowed to grow higher than 3” before it is mowed again.
- **Mow when the grass is dry.**
- **Keep your mower blade sharp** because dull mowers tear the grass blade, injuring the plant, and create a brownish cast to the turf.
- **If the grass gets just a bit too high,** simply mow over the clippings a second time to further shred and scatter them.
- **If excessive growth occurs between mowings,** raise the mower height, mow and then gradually lower it over a span of several mowings. This will help prevent shock to the plants.
- **When it’s time to replace your mower,** consider buying a mulching, recycling, or a non-polluting reel mower. All of these do a good job of shredding and scattering grass clippings.

Fertilizer Application

Proper fertilizer application is important. And remember, when it comes to fertilizer, **more is not better!** Research shows that most grasses require only **modest levels of nitrogen** for good color and controlled growth. Too much fertilizer will make your lawn grow faster, resulting in more mowing and more clippings!

Apply fertilizer to your lawn in late April and again in September. If a third treatment is needed, apply in late May. Apply only 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet of lawn at each application. To figure this out, simply divide 100 by twice the percentage of nitrogen (N) in the fertilizer. This will give you the application rate in pounds of fertilizer per 1000 square feet of lawn.

For slower, more uniform growth, choose fertilizers containing sources of self-release nitrogen such as methylene urea, ureaformaldehyde, sulfur coated urea, or IBDU. The bag may also read “water insoluble nitrogen” or “slow release nitrogen”. All are acceptable and will increase the amount of time the grass can use the nutrient.

Watering Practices

- **Conserve resources by not watering unless the grass really needs it.** Let Mother Nature water your lawn!
- **If you choose to water, 1” of water is adequate to wet the soil to a depth of 4”-6”.** Place an empty can under the sprinkler to measure when an inch has been applied. If water begins to run off the lawn before an inch is applied, turn off the water and let it soak in for an hour or so, then resume watering until 1” is applied.
- **Water deeply and less frequently to encourage deep root growth.** Light, frequent watering encourages shallow roots and may lead to increased disease and stress injury.
- **The best time to water is in the morning** because less water is lost through evaporation and transpiration.
- **Avoid watering during mid-day and try not to water in the evenings** since a lawn that remains damp during the night is more prone to disease.

**DON'T TRASH THEM
RECYCLE THEM
Grass Clippings
Do's and Don'ts**



MS4 Stormwater Program

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Make a splash this Summer...

Be Part of the Solution. Stop Stormwater Pollution. Clean Water Starts with **You!**

...in Valparaiso

Grass Clippings Do's

- **Leave them on the lawn** — This practice provides many benefits (see the panel on right)!
- **Other uses** for clippings — Compost with other yard waste, use as mulch, or incorporate into garden soil.

Grass Clippings Don'ts

- **Don't trash them** — They add cost to collection and are too valuable to throw away.
- **Don't blow them into street, leave them on other paved areas or near any water bodies, or dump in neighborhood common areas** — Grass clippings are stormwater pollutants. The nitrogen and phosphorus they contain will reach storm sewer system and then a river or a lake, causing algal bloom. All the practices above are **illegal**.



Benefits of leaving grass clippings on the lawn

- **Reduced watering** — Grass clippings contain 80 to 85% water and decompose quickly when left on the lawn, assisting in keeping moisture in the soil longer.
- **Reduced Fertilizing** — Grass clippings contain about 4% nitrogen (N), 0.5% phosphorus (P), 2% potassium (K), plus small amounts of other plant nutrients. If left on the lawn, grass clippings can supply 25% of a lawn's total fertilizer needs.
- **Reduced Air Emissions** — Reducing the tonnage of grass clippings hauled to other places will reduce exhaust emission from hauling vehicles.
- **Cost Savings** — Less money spent on fertilizers and watering.
- **Time Savings** — Not needing to stop & bag the clippings, you can cut your mowing time by 30% when you leave them on the lawn.

What About Thatch?

Turf experts nationwide agree that **clippings do not produce thatch** because they are 80% water and decompose quickly. Rather, thatch is the accumulation of dead roots and stems and is most often caused by over fertilizing and over watering.

Why grass clippings should not be trashed

- In the United States, if bagged, grass clippings account for around 20% of a household's annual output of solid waste.
- In the collection system, grass clippings are costly nuisance. The clippings add significantly to the city's waste stream and add expense for all residents.
- When taken to landfills, as grass clippings decompose the nutrients they contain are not only wasted, but they also contribute to landfill leachate and groundwater contamination.
- Grass clippings are too valuable to throw away. They contain plant nutrients and organic matter for your soil.

Valparaiso Department of Public Works reminds you:

- **Never** place grass clippings in your garbage or recycling containers.
- For Valparaiso residents who have City trash/recycle collection and who still wish to bag, grass clippings may be brought to the organic waste compost site at 2150 W. Lincolnway. A "Grass Pass" is required to dispose of clippings.
- Contact Public Works Department at 462-4612 for any questions.