

Healthy Lawn and Garden

Techniques to help improve the health of home lawns and gardens, save time and money, and reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions.



R·R·R·A·S·O·C

Manage Yard Clippings at Home Through Backyard Composting and Grasscycling.

Yard clippings are defined as leaves, grass clippings, vegetable or other garden debris, shrubbery, or brush or tree trimmings, less than 4 feet in length and 2 inches in diameter. Many of these materials can be easily managed at home through backyard composting and grasscycling. These techniques can improve the health of home lawns and gardens, save time, money, and reduce harmful greenhouse Gas emissions.

Make the Most of Your Lawn and Your Time - Grasscycle!

Grasscycling, a simple natural approach to lawn care, is the practice of leaving grass clippings on the lawn or using them as mulch. Grass clippings are 75 to 85 percent water and decompose quickly. Through decomposition, grass clippings release nitrogen and other valuable nutrients resulting in a greener, healthier lawn without the use of fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides. Inappropriate application of fertilizer contributes to pollution of waterways which can impact the health of wildlife and aquatic species.

With grasscycling there is no raking or bagging of grass which means less time spent on lawn care. Consequently, eliminating the use of bags, reducing the frequency of stops and starts of the lawn mower to bag grass, and using grass clippings to add nutrients to the lawn instead of commercial fertilizer saves money. Less time using the mower will also save gas and reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

How To Grasscycle

Replace your conventional lawn mower blade with a mulching blade or use a mulching mower. Mulching mowers and blades are designed to allow the yard debris to be cut multiple times during the mowing process.

Mow grass to no more than 3 inches tall. For healthier grass, remove only one-third of the grass blade at a time, and no more than one-inch total. Leave the grass clippings where they fall and allow them to decompose.

Grasscycling Tips

- 1** Mow when lawn is dry
- 2** For wet lawns, raise the initial cutting height and gradually lower to proper height on follow-up passes
- 3** Use excess clippings as a mulch around plants or leave on the lawn
- 4** Direct clippings onto the lawn. Any clips that blow from under the mower onto sidewalks or driveways should be swept back onto the lawn to prevent them from ending up in surface water or drains. This adds nutrients to surface water and increases the growth of algae and other aquatic plants that can deplete oxygen in surface waters.

DID YOU KNOW?

When yard clippings decompose in landfills they create methane gas. The US EPA has identified landfills as the single largest source of methane (CH₄), a potent greenhouse gas that is 23 times more efficient at trapping heat than carbon dioxide (CO₂).

Landfills contribute approximately 34% of all man-made methane released to the atmosphere in the United States (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2007).

AMAZING FACT

During the spring and summer months grass clippings account for up to 50 percent of one's total yard trimmings.

MYTHBUSTER

Leaving grass clippings on your lawn does not cause thatch.

Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County

contact us at 20000 W. Eight Mile Rd. Southfield, MI 48075 online at www.RRRASOC.org or call 248.208.2270

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Backyard Composting

Composting is the result of aerobic bacteria, fungi and other micro-organisms breaking down organic materials. Households produce a significant amount of organic material that is well suited for composting such as vegetative food scraps from the kitchen, dead houseplants, leaves, twigs, grass clippings, garden trimmings and weeds.

How To Compost

Materials needed: Sources of carbon, sources of nitrogen, air and water.

Ingredients: Green and brown yard waste, water as needed.

Your compost bin or pile will need more carbon (brown) materials than nitrogen (green) materials; about 25-30 parts carbon to one part nitrogen materials (C:N ratio; 25-30:1).

Carbon or brown materials are dry leaves, woody plant trimmings, paper, straw, pine needles and sawdust. Nitrogen or green materials are kitchen scraps (no meat, no fat, no bones), leafy plant trimmings, spent flowers, herbs and vegetables, livestock manure (no dog, cat or human manure), weeds (foliage only), pet bedding, hair and fur, feathers and hay.

Remember the **4 Rules of Composting**: Quality **Materials**, Adequate **Volume** of pile, Consistent **Moisture**, Good **Air** circulation.

Directions:

- 1.) Mix one part green yard waste with two parts brown to form a pile; an average size is 4'x4'x4'. For fast composting, chop it up first with a hoe or lawn mower.
- 2.) Mix in one inch of soil.
- 3.) Keep the pile as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
- 4.) Turn the pile every week to let air in.

Finished compost will take between four weeks and one year, depending on how often you turn it and how well you maintain the moisture of the pile.

Tips for Composting Grass Clippings

Grass clippings are mostly water and are very rich in nitrogen. They can be problematic because they tend to compact, increasing the chance of becoming anaerobic (absence of oxygen), matting together and emitting a strong ammonia-like odor. Here are some tips for composting this valuable "green":

- Compost grass clippings in thin layers, intermixed in a 2-to-1 ratio with brown materials such as dry leaves or plant debris.
- Save and bag Fall leaves for Spring/Summer grass composting.
- Use a thick layer of coarse brown material at the bottom of the pile or your bin for aeration.
- Let grass clippings dry out for a couple of days before composting.
- If you're attempting to compost a large quantity of grass clippings with a good source of brown material, turn the pile using a compost aeration tool, every few days to get air into the materials. This will help to prevent potential odors.

DID YOU KNOW?

As much as 35% of household waste is made up of kitchen scraps and yard clippings; which are ideal for backyard composting.

Do Compost

Leaves
Grass clippings
Dead plants
Vegetative food scraps
Fruit wastes
Manure
Straw/Hay
Coffee grounds
Weeds

Don't Compost

Weeds that have gone to seed and/or invasive
Wood ashes
Lime
BBQ charcoal
Meat, grease, bones
Dairy products
Cat, dog or human fecal matter
Contaminated matter
Branches and wood chunks

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