

# Kansas Green Teams

Friday Facts – June 24, 2011

Grasscycling

## What is grasscycling?

Grasscycling is recycling grass clippings by leaving them on your lawn instead of collecting them for disposal. In Kansas, grass clippings make up approximately five percent of the waste in our landfills. With nearly 3 million tons of municipal solid waste landfilled in 2010, over 145,000 tons of grass clippings could have been diverted! Grasscycling is a practice that can help produce a healthy lawn while at the same time benefit you, your community and the environment.

Grasscycling works. Did you know that the first bag mowers made their debut in the 1950s? This was immediately followed by the time-honored American tradition of collecting grass clippings and placing them at the curb – sometimes in a bag – to be picked up with the rest of the yard trimmings to be disposed of at a landfill.

You may not have thought of it, but bagging and placing yard trimmings at the curb is a wasteful behavior in many ways. It can be an expensive practice with the cost of the bags as well as transportation to pick up the clippings. It also robs your lawn of natural fertilizer. Consider changing that behavior. Consider grasscycling.

## What are the benefits of grasscycling?

- saves time and is less work (no more bagging, less time maintaining lawn)
- saves money (less water and fertilizer are needed)
- encourages a healthier lawn (clippings contain valuable nutrients)



There are other hidden benefits. By not handling heavy bags of grass clippings, back and other injuries can be avoided. Grasscycling helps reduce water use. Grass clippings, which are 75 to 85 percent water, decompose rapidly and return that moisture to the soil. Grass clippings can reduce water evaporation from the lawn and promote better growth by not only providing nutrients but also by keeping the soil temperature cooler. Grasscycling also reduces the need for chemical fertilizers. Grass clippings contain nutrients including nitrogen. The nitrogen and other nutrients provide up to 50 percent of your lawn's fertilizer needs. That's good for the environment. That helps protect local streams, rivers and lakes from runoff pollution from yards and gardens.

## Grasscycling is simple

- **Cut your grass when it's dry**
- **Cut your grass regularly** – A good rule is to cut no more than one-third of the grass height at any one mowing. Cutting off more than one-third at a time can stop roots from growing and require frequent watering during dry summers to keep the grass alive. In addition, the one-third rule produces smaller clippings that disappear quickly by filtering down to the soil surface.
- **Cut your grass with a sharp blade** – Sharp blades cut the grass cleanly and that helps ensure rapid healing and regrowth. Dull blades tear and bruise the grass. The wounded grass becomes weakened and is less able to prevent invading weeds and recover from disease.

To maximize the benefits of grasscycling, aerate your lawn. In the spring, rent an aerator, which removes small cores of soil from the lawn. This opens the soil and permits greater movement of water, fertilizer and air – which speeds decomposition of the grass clippings and improves deep root growth. Water thoroughly when needed. Make sure you follow proper lawn care for your type of grass.



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