

MOWING LAWNS

Proper mowing is an essential part of maintaining a quality lawn. It helps encourage vigorous growth which minimizes the impact of disease and insect problems.

When mowing, adjust the height of cut to the turf grass species. Excessively close mowing results in a shallow root system and weakened plants that are susceptible to weed invasion. The best cutting height for Kentucky bluegrass and fine-leaved fescue lawns is 2-3 inches. In the hot summer months leave the lawn slightly longer to minimize the chance of burn out.

To determine the cutting height on your mower, place the mower on a hard, level surface and adjust the bed knife reel or the blade edge to the desired height. A sharp mower blade is necessary to keep the tips of the grass blades from shredding and turning brown, which would make them susceptible to entry by disease organisms.

The frequency of mowing depends on the growth rate of the lawn rather than the calendar. Do not remove more

than one-third of the total leaf length in one mowing. Generally, you will need to mow more frequently in the spring and autumn because the cool moist weather favors vigorous growth. infrequent mowing stresses the lawn and creates an unsightly appearance.

If you mow often enough, it is not necessary to rake clippings even if you don't have a mulching mower. Plant nutrients are recycled when you return leaf clippings reducing fertilizer needs by 20%. Research shows that returning clippings to the lawn does not increase thatch buildup.

In the spring, lawns should not be allowed to go to seed. This will stress the turf unduly when it is mowed because a major portion of the leaf blade will be removed. If the grass needs over seeding, use purchased seed. In the autumn, grass should not become too long. Longer blades may be attacked by winter fungal diseases. The lawn should overwinter at the same height at which it was grown in the summer.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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