

# Grass Clippings:

Too Valuable to Waste!



## The Ecologic and Economic Impact of Grass Clippings

The common practice of treating grass clippings as waste is resulting in overloaded landfills and stormwater pollution. Grass clippings left on the streets and sidewalks pollute waterbodies through nearby storm drains. Excessive algae growth is a major outcome of yard waste pollution in streams, lakes, and ponds throughout the country. At large amounts, algae can be detrimental to fish and humans by limiting the amount of oxygen in the water. In addition to algae growth, grass clippings can also clog storm drains resulting in potential flooding and expensive maintenance to correct the problem.

## Grass Pollution Prevention

**Leave it on the Lawn** – A mulching lawnmower shreds the clippings and leaves them on the grass to decompose. Mulching not only prevents stormwater pollution, it also provides moisture and fertilizer for the lawn.

**Backyard Composting** – If grass clippings are typically bagged then backyard composting is another solution to pollution prevention. Home compost piles are becoming increasingly popular among residents. Adding grass to the compost pile provides both moisture and nitrogen allowing for more rapid decomposition. Composting yard waste is not necessarily restricted to a dedicated compost pile, mulching a garden is an additional option. Grass clippings provide natural fertilizer through nitrogen, potassium, and some phosphorus components. However, if weed killers were recently used on the lawn then it's unadvisable to mulch the garden.

**Less Frequent Lawn Mowing** – Mowing your grass less can actually be beneficial and prevent weeds from growing. Cutting only the top 1/3 of the grass blades will shade out some weeds and encourage deep root systems. Additionally, leaving 2 to 3 inches of grass keeps most of the nutrients in.



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