

Natural lawncare calendar

For more detailed information, see www.nyccompost.org.

Winter

- Avoid walking on your lawn; wet and soggy turf is more subject to damage. If you walk on your lawn when it's wet, you can permanently harm the soil structure.
- Have your mower tuned up before the spring rush. Make sure blades are sharp and properly balanced.
- If you are in the market for a new mower, consider a rechargeable, electric mulching mower. They are quiet and reduce air pollution.

Spring

- Hold off on fertilizing until September or October, so that grass won't grow excessively in the spring.
- Have your soil tested. Do not use lime until you know from the soil test how much lime your lawn needs, if any at all.
- Mowing height should be set to 3 inches. Mowing high reduces plant stress, making grass less susceptible to diseases.
- Avoid removing more than the top third of the grass blade, or mowing when the grass is wet.
- If grass clippings are clumpy or unsightly, mow over them a second time, scatter grass clippings with a blower or rake, or collect them and add them to your compost pile.
- Do not water your lawn (unless re-seeding) until temperatures stay consistently in the 80's F and/or rainfall drops off to less than one inch per week.

Summer

- Keep mowing height high—3 inches or more, especially in hot, dry weather.
- Lawns need a total of one inch of water per week—this includes rainfall. Set out an empty tuna fish or cat food can to gauge. When the can is full, this is one inch of rainwater.
- If temperatures stay in the 90's F for more than three days, lawns need 2 inches of water per week. Apply a half inch every other day.
- For best results, water early in the morning—before 9 am.
- Follow drought-watering guidelines if restrictions are in effect. Your lawn may go dormant and turn brown, but it will green up as soon as rainfall increases and cooler temperatures return.

Fall

- Fertilize. Use a slow-release, organic fertilizer formulated for fall application. This may be applied anytime from September through November.
- Continue to mow at 3 inches minimum. Mulch the early fall leaves right back into your lawn.
- Re-seed, if necessary. Consult with an authorized dealer to choose quality seed that best suits the conditions of your home environment. Topdress with a quarter-inch of compost—avoid peat moss.
- Use the bagging attachment on your mower to collect shredded leaves for mulch or your compost pile.

For more information

For more information on grass recycling and composting, see www.nyccompost.org, or contact:

Bronx Compost Project
The New York Botanical Garden
200th Street and Kazimiroff Boulevard
Bronx, NY 10458
compost helpline: (718) 817-8543
email: bronxgreenup@nybg.org
web: www.nybg.org

Brooklyn Compost Project
Brooklyn Botanic Garden
1000 Washington Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11225
compost helpline: (718) 623-7290
email: compost@bbg.org
web: www.bbg.org

Manhattan Compost Project
Lower East Side Ecology Center
P.O. Box 20488
New York, NY 10009
compost helpline: (212) 477-3155
email: info@lesecologycenter.org
web: www.lesecologycenter.org

Queens Compost Project
Queens Botanical Garden
43-50 Main Street
Flushing, NY 11355
compost helpline: (718) 539-5296
email: compost@queensbotanical.org
web: www.queensbotanical.org

Staten Island Compost Project
Staten Island Botanical Garden
1000 Richmond Terrace
Staten Island, NY 10305
compost helpline: (718) 362-1010
email: ask@sibg.net
web: www.sibg.org

Leave it on the lawn

A guide to mulch-mowing



**For a greener, cleaner
New York City,
leave grass clippings
on the lawn!**

**(Be sure to share this
information with your
landscaper!)**



The DSNY Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling has funded compost outreach and education programs in all five boroughs since 1993.
www.nyc.gov/wasteless
www.nyccompost.org



Help reduce New York City's waste

To reduce New York City's waste stream by more than 78,000 tons per year, the Department of Sanitation is asking City residents and institutions not to place grass clippings out for collection and disposal. Instead of raking and bagging clippings, the Department encourages New Yorkers to leave them on the lawn, where they will decompose naturally and return nutrients and moisture to the soil.

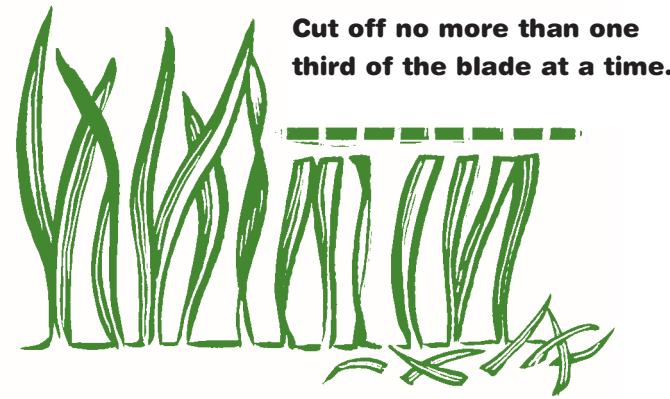
Private landscapers are not permitted to place clippings at the curb for collection by the Department of Sanitation. Landscapers should work with their customers to adopt “**leave it on the lawn**” practices. Otherwise, landscapers are responsible for removing clippings and taking them to a composting or waste disposal facility.



How to leave clippings on the lawn

Leaving grass clippings on the lawn is easy—simply remove your mower's bagging attachment (if you have one) and don't rake up the clippings when you're done mowing!

If you are concerned about unsightly “clumps” of grass clippings, follow these simple steps to make “leaving it on the lawn” more attractive:



- **Cut grass when it is dry.** Avoid mowing wet grass, since wet clippings mass together.
- **Use a sharp mower blade.** Dull mowers use more gasoline, and can give the lawn a frayed appearance. Grass plants also recover quicker from a “clean cut.” Generally, mower blades should be sharpened twice a year.
- **Don't cut off more than one-third of the grass blade in any one mowing. Never cut off more than an inch at a time.** Shorter clippings will tend not to mass together. If you want to further shred clippings, simply mow over them a second time.
- **When you are mowing along sidewalk edges,** make sure the blower is facing back into your lawn in order to avoid having to sweep up clippings from the street!

Did you know?

- Grass clippings are **85% water and 5% nitrogen**. When left on the lawn, they return water and nutrients to the soil.
- Grass clippings can provide **up to 30% of your fertilizer requirements**.
- For every eighth of an inch that a lawnmower blade is raised, there is a 30% increase in a grass blade's surface area—**improving its ability to take in water and nutrients**.
- **Any mower** can recycle grass clippings; you do not need to purchase a special mower. Simply remove the bagging attachment. If you have trouble using your mower without the bagger, contact your dealer for assistance.
- There are “recycling” or “mulching” mowers manufactured especially for leaving clippings on the lawn. They are specifically designed to grind up the pieces of grass. With a bagging attachment, they can pick up the clippings when they are wet and heavy in the spring. They're also excellent for **shredding and collecting fall leaves**, which you can then add to your compost pile (see “**Other easy alternatives**”).

General lawncare tips

By following these general lawncare tips, you can avoid excessive grass blade growth (and conserve water at the same time). This will mean less stress on your lawn and will make it easier to leave clippings on the lawn.

- **Mow grass when it is between 3 inches and 4 inches tall.** Mowing grass when it is taller gives your lawn a healthier root system.
- Lawns require **one inch of water per week** in the growing season—including rainfall. Additional watering is only required when temperatures stay consistently above 80°F.
- **Water early in the morning** to minimize evaporation. **Avoid watering in the evening**, because a lawn that remains damp during the night is more prone to disease.
- Use a **slow-release or natural organic fertilizer** and do not over-fertilize.
- Rapid spring grass blade growth can and should be avoided—**don't apply fertilizer at this time of year**. Topdressing with compost and applying fertilizer in the fall will help root growth and should produce a spring green-up without excessive growth.
- Spread fertilizer in two applications per year: the first in September or October; the second in November. **Do not exceed 3 lbs. of nitrogen per year.**

Other easy alternatives

Some conditions make it difficult to leave clippings on the lawn, such as long periods of rain, or when the grass has grown too high. Instead, use one of the following options to keep grass out of the waste stream:

Mulch: Collect clippings and use as mulch around plants and shrubs. Apply a one-inch layer of clippings to reduce water evaporation, eliminate weeds, and enrich the soil. Do not place mulch directly against trunks and stems.

Backyard compost: Add clippings to your compost pile; they are an excellent source of nitrogen. Clippings should be mixed thoroughly with a greater volume of leaves or old compost.

For more information about composting, call your borough's compost helpline number listed on the back.

Two kinds of homemade compost bins—wooden slats, and chicken wire rolled into a cylinder.

