

# Mowing Your Lawn

You may think there is not much to know about mowing your lawn, but did you know that your lawn's density, vigor, water consumption, weed infestation, and resistance to weather stress are largely affected by how it is mowed? The effectiveness of all other maintenance - fertilizing, watering, and weed control - depends on proper mowing. There is more to proper mowing than just cutting the grass.

**MOWING HEIGHT:** Never cut more than 1/3 of the length of the grass in a single mowing. Even if your lawn is out of hand, don't cut it back down all in one mowing. Give it a trim, and then wait a couple of days before mowing it again. Mowing at the proper height is critical to your lawn's healthy development. A higher height encourages a deeper root system, looks better, and the lawn is less likely to have invasive weeds, particularly crabgrass.

<b>Turfgrass Species</b>	<b>Spring/Fall Mowing Height</b>	<b>Summer Stress Periods Height</b>
Kentucky Bluegrass	2 - 2.5 inches	2.5 - 3 inches
Perennial Ryegrass	2 - 2.5 inches	2.5 - 3 inches
Fine Fescue	2 - 2.5 inches	2.5 - 3 inches
Tall Fescue	2.5 - 3 inches	2.5 - 3.5 inches

**MOWING DIRECTION:** It is a good idea to alternate mowing direction from one mowing to the next. This will prevent the grass blades from leaning in the direction of mowing. Establish a pattern that results in as few turns as possible to reduce damage from the mower's wheels.

**MOW WHEN DRY:** Turfgrass should be mowed when it is dry, but during rainy weather it is better to mow wet grass than to let it get too tall.

**WHEN IT'S HOT:** Lawns can be damaged if you mow during midday when the temperature is near 90°F or higher, and the soil is very dry. If you must mow, do it in early morning, late afternoon, or after a rainfall occurs. During drought periods, mow less frequently and raise the mower height.

**GRASS CLIPPINGS:** Turfgrass clippings are not harmful if you follow the 1/3 rule. Clippings can aid the grass by returning nutrients back to the soil. Research has shown that when clippings are removed, 20-25% more fertilizer was necessary to maintain comparable color and quality as areas where clippings were returned. Contrary to popular belief, turfgrass clippings do not contribute to thatch accumulation.

**MOWER MAINTENANCE:** If you're not using sharp lawn mower blades on your mower, you're tearing the blade of your grass, not cutting them. This not only makes your lawn look ragged, but the rough edges can also increase your lawn's susceptibility to disease.

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