

Don't Bag It...

Grass cycle instead

Canada is running out of landfill space. Currently many large cities have only a few years' worth of space remaining.

There are a great variety of materials placed in landfills, including both recyclable and non-recyclable items. One fairly significant solid waste product that doesn't have to go into landfill sites at all, and it is certainly recyclable - grass clippings.

Across Canada, during the growing season, ton after ton of grass clippings are deposited in local landfills. Surveys have shown that, in some neighborhoods, as much as one half of the solid waste pickups during the summer are grass clippings. Not only do these clippings take up valuable space, but it costs cities and towns thousands of dollars for the pick up and transportation of the clippings to landfill.

Returning grass clippings to a lawn has always been considered an acceptable lawn maintenance practice by people who appreciate the major advantages over the minor disadvantages.

Clippings do not contribute to thatch

Grass clippings are a valuable resource to homeowners maintaining a lawn. The clippings contain over four per cent nitrogen, about two per cent potassium, and one half per cent phosphorus, all of which are essential plant nutri-

ents. Grass clippings are between 20 and 30 per cent protein and are rapidly attacked by bacteria and fungi causing fast decomposition. They do not contribute to thatch.

Thatch is a spongy layer on your lawn of intermingled living and dead plant material high in lignin, such as roots, stems and crowns. Lignin is a hard bodied plant substance that is highly decay resistant. While thatch has always been associated with the return of clippings to the lawn,



clippings and thatch are simply not connected.

The bagging of clippings started back in 1950 with the first mowers with catcher attachments. The evolution of the bagging device has now reached the point that non-bagging mowers are

hard to market. Once someone had a clipping catcher attachment they felt obligated to use, then gather clippings in plastic bags and have them carried to the landfill. Recently, however, some brands of mowers are appearing on the market that mulch or recycle clippings back into the lawn.

It is to the advantage of every community and person to reduce the demands on its solid waste facilities and extend the life of its landfill as long as possible, but how can this be accomplished? In the use of clippings, homeowners must learn how to manage a lawn without using the mower's bagging attachment.

A "Don't Bag Grass" program is very simple, with three key elements.

Watering

During the driest period of summer, lawns usually require 1-1 1/2 inches of water every five to six days. Most hose sprinklers put out one-fourth to one-third inch of water an hour. If water runs off the lawn, before the water all soaks in, turn off the sprinkler and let it soak in, then continue watering. The best time to water is early morning.

Mowing

For optimum results, mow at least once a week. As a rule of thumb, do not remove more than a third of the leaf surface at any one time. Grass clippings left on

your lawn will not contribute to thatch, but will return valuable nutrients.

Fertilizing

The rate of nutrients in the fertilizer and the rate of frequency of application all affect how well grass grows. Fertilize only so the lawn can grow at a reasonable rate and still maintain good color. For slow growth use a fertilizer that releases nutrients slowly such as Weed Man fertilizer.

While mowing, it is less of an effort to recycle clippings, rather

than catching the clippings, emptying the cutter and carting it away. It is also much easier to handle a mower without a catcher attachment.

Grass clippings are of great benefit to the lawn and they aren't needed in landfills. We can all do our part to improve the environment by maintaining a healthy lawn and not bagging the grass clippings. It's easy, efficient, effective and inexpensive.

Editorial from Weed Man's Gardening News by Turf Management Systems Inc.

New toilets help you to save water

In the environmentally-conscious decade of the '90s, one way to conserve water in the home will be with the toilet.

The idea of limiting the amount of water that is literally flushed down the toilet is not new, but there are now toilets on the market that save considerable amounts of water and maintain the high standards of sanitation to which we have become accustomed.

These new ultra low consumption toilets require 1.5 gallons of water per flush, which is only 43 per cent of the water used by the 3.5 gallon toilets that have been the standard since the 1970s.

Back at the time of the original

Earth Day, twenty-plus years ago, when most toilets used five gallons per flush, some enterprising people put bricks in their toilet tanks to reduce the amount of water used with each flush. What they didn't know was that adding the bricks, or anything else that would displace some of the water in the tank, altered the carefully engineered balance between water consumption and the structural design of the toilet. That reduced the effectiveness of the flush - sometimes necessitating a second flush, which didn't save any water, says Judy Puls, senior

product manager, fixtures, for Kohler Co., a leading manufacturer of plumbing products.

It's no longer necessary to improvise to save water, Puls explains. In the last decade, plumbing product manufacturers have refined the technology used in the conventional gravity flush toilets so that new models will require less water to accomplish the same objective. They have also developed new mechanisms, such as pressure tanks, which aid the flushing process, while limiting the amount of water used.

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