

ENVIRONMENT

Don't Bag It...

Grass cycle instead

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 nutrients. 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.

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.



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