



Turf Tips

Mowing

The single most important aspect of having a healthy lawn is to adopt proper mowing techniques. Proper mowing involves mowing height, mulching, the sharpness of your mower's blade, time of day, and frequency.

Mowing Height

In the spring, the first cut should be short, between 1.5"-1.75", especially if the grass was left long going into the winter. A short cut allows the soil to warm up faster, promoting an earlier green-up and aids in the cleanup of leaves and other debris.

Once the lawn starts growing, all areas should be mown at 3" until late fall. A 3" mowing height minimizes drought stress and helps prevent many diseases. Starting in early-to-mid October, you can begin dropping the mowing height down a notch each week to 2.5" and then 2" by early November. The final cut in November should be as short as possible without scalping the lawn, usually close to 1.5" since grass often grows a little under the snow.

Mulching

Mulch your clippings with a mulching mower versus bagging them. Allowing your clippings to decompose increases organic matter by returning valuable nutrients to the soil. Regular bagging of grass clippings robs your lawn of valuable resources that improve soil quality and health. An occasional bagging is fine, but doing it on a regular basis is not good for the long-term health of your lawn.

Sharp Mower Blades

Blade sharpness is very important because a dull blade shreds the ends of the grass creating a jagged leaf edge. A jagged leaf edge has several consequences: an unpleasant appearance, an increased vulnerability to a variety of infections and chronic diseases, and a greater susceptibility to drought.

Visually, a jagged edge creates a brown to white tint on your lawn. A sharp mower blade makes a clean cut that heals over more quickly than a cut from a dull blade. Quicker healing reduces the chances for diseases like red thread from taking

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hold. Additionally, grass blades lose a great deal of water after being cut. The sooner the cut can heal, the less stress from water loss, especially during the summer.

Time of Day

The best mowing practice is to mow in the morning or late afternoon to reduce stress from water loss. When your lawn has irrigation or sufficient rainfall and the temperatures are moderate, the time of day can be more flexible. However, mowing your lawn in the high heat of the midday during the warmer, drier months can have serious to devastating consequences. Stress from water loss and from the weight of the mower, combined with short mowing (below 2") can literally shock your lawn so severely it will turn brown within hours. Once brown and dormant, a lawn will need many weeks with proper irrigation to green-up again.

See Chippers' Turf Tips on Lawn Watering.

Frequency

Mowing once a week should suffice during most of the year, with the exception of the spring when robust growth may require mowing every 4-5 days. Don't mow at all during summer weather when it's hot and/or dry. No good can come from mowing when your lawn is dry and overheated.

Mowing Height Summary

First Cut of the Year 1.5"-1.75"

May – September 3" – yes, 3"!

October – Early November *Starting at 2.5" - down to 2", dropping the height a notch with each mowing*

Last Cut of the Season 1.5"

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Complimentary*



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