



THATCH DE-MYTHED

Thatch is a dense layer of living and dead organic matter that occurs between the green matter and the soil surface.

The primary component of **thatch** is turfgrass stems and roots, not the grass blade. It accumulates as these plant parts buildup faster than they breakdown.

Thatch problems are due to a combination of biological, cultural, and environmental factors. Cultural practices can have a big impact on thatch. For example, heavy nitrogen fertilizer applications or overwatering frequently contribute to thatch, because they cause the lawn to grow excessively fast.

Thatch is most often caused by over-watering and over-fertilizing.

Despite popular belief, short clippings dropped on the lawn after mowing are not the cause of thatch buildup. Clippings are very high in water content and breakdown rapidly when returned to lawns after mowing, assuming lawns are mowed on a regular basis (not removing more than one-third of the leaf blade).

(University of Illinois Extension)

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/lawnchallenge/lesson5.html>



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Produced in 2010

LEAVE IT ON THE LAWN



*The benefits to leaving
your grass clippings
on the lawn.*





ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Leaving lawn clippings where they lay has many environmental benefits:

Water Quality

Reduced Watering: Grass clippings contain 80 to 85 percent water and decompose quickly when left on the lawn, assisting in keeping moisture in the soil longer.



Reduced Fertilizing: Up to 25% of a lawn's total fertilizer needs can be met if grass clippings are left on the lawn. These clippings slowly release essential nutrients—nitrogen, potassium, phosphorus, and minor elements.

Air Quality

Reduced Air Emissions: Reducing the tonnage of grass clippings hauled to the compost facility will reduce diesel exhaust emissions from Town trucks. The Town hauls an average of 320 tons of grass clippings (2008 & 2009) over an average of 1,362 miles per year. Hauling is done by a large diesel truck. As with all vehicles, trucks give off emissions from exhaust and also release small amounts of heavy metals from brakes.

COST SAVINGS

Costs for maintaining your lawn can add up! But when you *Leave It On The Lawn* you can actually save money.



- Less money spent on fertilizers.
- Less money spent on watering.
- Less money spent on gasoline to haul your grass clippings to the Town's compost drop-off site.

Less tax dollars allocated for hauling grass clippings to the Town's compost site. In 2008 & 2009 the Town spent over \$3,800 just to haul clippings. This doesn't include any additional maintenance and management costs associated with hauling and composting grass clippings.

TIME SAVINGS

You can cut your mowing time by 30% when you *Leave It On The Lawn*.



- No stopping and starting to empty your mower bag.
- No raking clippings and putting them into bags or in your truck bed.
- No loading up bags into your vehicle and driving them over to the Town's compost drop-off site.

When you *Leave It On The Lawn* you'll spend less time watering and fertilizing your lawn and you'll have more time to sit and enjoy it!

HOW TO LEAVE IT ON THE LAWN

Leaving grass clippings on the lawn is easy! There is no need to buy a new mower. Simply remove your mower's bagging attachment (if you have one) and don't rake up the clippings when you're done mowing!

Follow these steps to make *Leaving It On The Lawn* more attractive:

- Cut grass when it is dry - wet grass clumps together when mowed.
- 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 clump together.
- 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 and sidewalks.

