

## Frequently Asked Questions

## “Cut It & Leave It”

### *Do grass clippings cause thatch and lawn disease?*

**No.** Research has shown that **grass roots** are the primary cause of thatch, not grass clippings. Thatch is composed primarily of roots, stems, rhizomes, and other plant materials. These plant materials contain **large amounts of lignin** (fibrous material) and **decompose slowly**. Grass clippings are approximately 80-85 percent water with only **small amounts of lignin**, and **decompose rapidly**.

### *Will grass clippings make your lawn look bad?*

**No.** If a lawn is properly mowed, watered, and fertilized, grass clippings can actually produce a **healthier** looking lawn. It is important to cut the lawn **frequently** to produce small clippings that will decompose quickly. If a lawn is not cut frequently and clippings are left on the lawn, it will produce a “hay-like” look, which can be unsightly.

“Cut It and Leave It” is the **natural** way you can have a **green, healthy** lawn while spending **less time and money...** and think of the amount of waste that will be **diverted** from the solid waste stream!

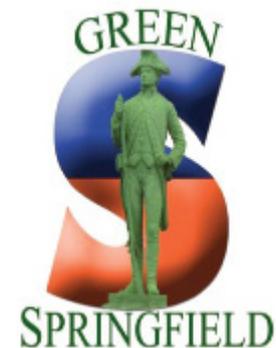
Most lawnmower manufacturers have developed “**mulching**” mowers, which cut grass blades into small pieces and force them into the soil. These types of mowers are effective in grass recycling and have become very popular. Make your next mower a mulching one.

### **To Learn More:**

- US EPA “Greenscaping Your Lawn and Garden: <http://www.epa.gov/wastes/education/pdfs/home-gs.pdf>
- NJDEP Healthy Lawns Healthy Water: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/healthylawnshealthywater/>
- Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension of Union County: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/quickinfo.asp?Union>
- Springfield Township: <http://springfield-nj.us/departments/departments-of-public-works/>

# GRASS...

## Cut It & Leave It



Springfield Green Team

## Why “Cut It & Leave It”?

Grass clippings are a major part of the Township of Springfield municipal solid waste stream. Nearly **one third** of all summer waste generated by homeowners consists of grass clippings.

As a Springfield resident you probably already recycle paper, corrugated cardboard, glass, aluminum cans, and more. However, many people may not realize that another material that is easily recyclable is right under their feet, grass. The NJ Department of Environmental Protection estimates that as much as a **ton** of clippings is generated for every acre of turf grass each year.

A lawn that is 5,000 square feet generates **75 pounds** of grass clippings per mowing. By just cutting it and leaving it, think of the amount of waste that will be diverted from the solid waste stream.

## Benefits of “Cut It & Leave It”

Grass clippings can be added to the list of common home wastes that can be recycled. Simply leave your clippings on the lawn when you mow, and let nature do the recycling for you. Grass clippings will provide a **natural fertilizer** for a growing lawn, which also helps retain moisture for your lawn, while reducing weed growth and soil erosion.

When “Cut it & Leave it” is properly done, clippings settle quickly between the growing blades of grass where they shelter the roots from the sun, and conserve moisture. As they break down, they release more moisture as well as nutrients into the soil. This means that grass needs to be **watered less frequently**.

Clippings left on the lawn supply **one-third** or more of the nitrogen needed to keep your grass green and healthy.

## How to “Cut It & Leave It”

Why spend time and energy buying bags, throwing grass clippings into them and bringing them to the DPW garage? There is a better a way!

Here is how – cut grass when **dry** and keep mower blades **sharp**. Follow the “1/3 Rule”: mow your lawn often enough so that no more than **1/3** of the length of the grass blade is cut in any one mowing. Frequent mowing will produce short clippings that will not cover up the grass surface. You may have to cut the lawn every **7 days** when the lawn is growing fast, but only every **7 to 14 days** when the lawn is growing slowly.

It’s best to use a mulching mower. If you are using a mower with a collection bag, the bag should be **removed** to allow clippings to drop on the lawn. However, if your mower does not have a safety flap covering the opening where the bag fits into the chute, it is important that you purchase a **retrofit kit** from your local retailer.