

Grass – Cut It and Leave It

The amount of solid waste generated in New Jersey increases annually, and the waste stream continues to grow faster than the State's ability to recycle it. Recycling is only part of the solution; waste reduction is also important. One small way we can all help is to reduce waste created by grass clippings, which can be as much as 1/3 of the waste generated in the growing season.

Simply, if you have a mulching lawn mower that can safely operate without the bag, don't bag the grass clippings, recycle them by leaving them on your lawn using the mulching feature. (Refer to your equipment supplier or operating manual) Clippings have lots of nutrients that contribute to soil organic matter and supply part of the fertilizer needs of the lawn. Concerned about thatch? Thatch is primarily caused by a dense accumulation of grass roots and stemmy material rather than clippings. Adopt a mowing schedule to keep clippings short enough (removing only 1/3 of the grass length during mowing) to filter through growing grass and not remain as a mat on top of the lawn.

Check if you hire a professional lawn service, if they already mulch. Also, fertilizing and watering above the requirements of the grass may be more detrimental than beneficial to your lawn. One of the effects is increased production of clippings, another is potential ground or surface water pollution. Judicious use of fertilizer and water can provide an attractive lawn with a reduction in the costs, effort, susceptibility to disease, and amount of clippings produced.

For more detailed information, and other uses of grass clippings, refer to the Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension publication #FS389 "Minimizing Waste Disposal: Grass Clippings" at <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS389>.

If you must bag your grass clippings, do not throw them in the garbage. Residents can haul them to the Chesterfield Township Municipal Complex behind the police station between half an hour before sunrise to half an hour after sunset. Do not leave bags there, please dump them out in the appropriate section marked "Leaf and Grass Recycling".