

Proper mowing keeps lawns healthy and attractive

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Education Resource**

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One of the most important components of lawn maintenance is mowing. It directly affects the health and quality of the turfgrass. Improperly mowed lawns will suffer and develop an unsightly appearance. Proper mowing consists of cutting the grass at the correct height and frequency. Doing so will create a healthy lawn by encouraging the development of a dense stand of turfgrass, which helps reduce weeds and other pests.



The proper mowing height is determined by the particular type of grass. Zoysiagrass should be mowed at 1 to 1 ½ inches. Hybrid bermudagrass prefers a height of a half inch to 1 ½ inches while common bermudagrass should be cut 1 to 2 inches high. Centipede grass likes to be maintained at 1 to 1 ½ inches while St. Augustine grass and tall fescue need to be cut at 2 to 3 inches.

During hot dry periods, raise the mowing height half an inch. The longer leaf blades will shade the soil which will keep the grass roots cooler and reduce moisture loss. When adjusting the mowing height, measure the distance of the mowing blades to the ground and make sure all four wheels are set at the same height.

When mowing, remove no more than one-third of the grass blade. For example, if you want to maintain the lawn at a height of 2 inches, mow when it is 3 inches high. Removing more than one-third will increase the lawn's susceptibility to pests and environmental stress. A sudden reduction in height greater than one-third can be damaging to the turfgrass. If the grass becomes too high between mowings, increase the height of the cut and then gradually lower it until the recommended height is reached for the particular type of grass.

The blades should be kept sharp at all times. Dull blades will shred the ends of the grass. The ragged blades will cause the lawn to develop an unsightly brown-to-white appearance. Also, the grass is more prone to diseases and water loss. Sharpen the blades as needed or replace with new ones.

While mowing, the best course of action is to let the grass clippings fall back onto the turf where they will break down and release nutrients. This will help provide organic matter for the soil and reduce the need for fertilization. Some people are concerned this will increase thatch, which are dead roots, stems, and grass blades that have accumulated between the surface of the soil and the green blades of the turf grass. Thatch can lead to increased pest problems and other difficulties. If the lawn is cut on a regular basis by removing no more than one-third of the leaf blade, the clippings should not form a thatch layer.

Remember, correct mowing is an important component of lawn care. Make sure it is mowed at the correct height and frequency using a sharp blade. Doing so will help ensure a healthy and attractive lawn.