

Lawn Mowing

Improper mowing causes more lawn problems than any other maintenance practice. But there's more to proper mowing than just cutting the grass!

Mowing height

- Mowing height depends mainly on the kind of grass and the time of the year. Cool season grasses (Fescue, Bluegrass, Ryegrass) need to be mowed higher than warm season grasses because of their erect growth habit. Cool season grasses should be cut higher during the summer than in the spring and fall because hot weather is very stressful on them.
- Warm season grasses (Bermuda, Buffalo, Zoysia) need to be mowed shorter than cool season grasses because their leaves are produced on runners that grow close to the ground. They grow best during the summer so there is no need to raise the summer mowing height to protect them from heat stress.
- Recommended mowing height (inches)

Grass	Spring	Summer	Fall
Tall Fescue	2.5"	3.5"	2.5"
Bluegrass	2"	3"	2"
Ryegrass	2"	3"	2"
Bermuda	1" to 1.5"	1" to 1.5"	1" to 1.5"
Zoysia	1" to 1.5"	1" to 1.5"	1" to 1.5"
Buffalo	1.5" to 2"	1.5" to 2"	1.5" to 2"

Mowing frequency

- It takes frequent and consistent mowing to produce a high quality, attractive lawn. It is best not to remove more than 1/3 of the total leaf surface at any one mowing.
- Base your mowing frequency on the growth rate of the grass, not on a set time schedule. This might mean mowing twice a week in the spring, every two weeks in the summer and once a week in the fall. The schedule will vary depending on weather conditions, watering practices and fertilizing practices.

Mower height	Grass height
1"	1.5"
1.5"	2.25"
2"	3"
2.5"	3.75"
3"	4.5"
3.5"	5.25"
4"	6"

Mowing pattern

- It is best to mow from a different angle each time the lawn is mowed. This allows soil compaction and turf wear from mower wheels to be uniformly distributed over the lawn. Try to establish mowing patterns that result in as few turns as possible. This speeds up mowing and reduces turf damage.
- It is a good practice, when mowing without a catcher, to mow so that grass clippings are thrown away from the uncut grass.

Mower operation & maintenance

- Selection: Use a mower large enough to mow the lawn in a reasonable amount of time, but yet small enough to be maneuverable. Make sure the mow height is adjustable within the range recommended for your grass. Two basic mower types are available, the reel type and the rotary type. Reel mowers are more expensive, won't cut high grass and weeds and must be sharpened by a professional. They are good for close cut turf. Rotary mowers cost less, will cut high grass and weeds, are easy to sharpen and will cut in either direction. They are more dangerous and noisy, take more power and may scalp uneven or close-cut turf. A type of rotary that's becoming more well known is the mulching mower. This mower finely chops the clippings before returning them to the grass. Using a mulching mower can add up to one pound of nitrogen to the lawn per year.
- Operation: Operate at a safe speed that will cut grass cleanly and thoroughly. When possible make wide gradual turns. Keep the mower properly adjusted and watch for loose or broken parts. Check the engine oil level before each mowing and change the oil regularly according to the manual. Clean air filters frequently and follow maintenance instructions in the manual. Keep your mower clean and remove dirt and grass from the mower housing immediately after each mowing. It is best to mow when the grass is dry, but during rainy weather mowing wet grass is better than letting it get too tall.
- Blades: The key to quality mowing is a sharp blade. Dull blades beat and tear, leaving frayed leaf tips that create a whitish color over the lawn. Inspect

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the blade after each mowing for nicks and dullness. It is a good idea to have an extra sharp blade on hand.

- Clippings: It is not necessary to remove clippings if you mow often enough so the clippings are short. However, long clippings that remain on top of the turf should be removed. Excess clippings exclude sunlight and favor disease when wet.
- Trees: Do not bump trees with your mower. Either hand trim around them or remove the turf and keep a circle of mulch around the base of each tree.
- Safety tips:
 - Pick up all debris before mowing
 - Wear sturdy shoes & long pants
 - Keep feet & hands away from mower blades
 - Watch your footing on slopes & wet grass
 - Do not leave a running mower unattended
 - Refuel when mower is off & motor is cool
 - Store fuel in an approved container
 - Read the mower operator's manual & keep mower in good repair