The Benefits of Mulching

The myth of mulching

by John Cloutier

here is a myth out there that mulching clippings is not good for turf. The myth would have you believe that mulching builds up thatch and that the final appearance is inferior to mowing and bagging clippings. The reality, however, is quite the contrary. If you have the right equipment, you can mulch, get a great looking cut, and actually improve the health of your turf.

Mulching, sometimes called "grasscycling," also recycles valuable nutrients into the turf while making significant strides toward waste reduction.

Mulching can also provide dramatic boosts to turf maintenance productivity. By eliminating the need to stop

and empty bags, then collect and dispose of clippings, turf care professionals can reduce the time it takes to cut grass on a property by 30 to 50 percent.

Mulching conserves water and keeps turf greener

Grass clippings contain nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.

Grasscycling returns these nutrients to the turf, providing up to 25 percent of the lawn's total annual nitrogen Grass blades are requirement. between 70 and 80 percent water when freshly cut. When the grass is

chopped finely and blown deep into the turf, much of the moisture returns to the soil. Plus, the dry mulch acts as a barrier that reduces evaporation from the soil, further conserving water.

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"In the summer when it's dry, we see the difference in the turf. Even with the same watering, our grass stays greener than neighboring turf where the clippings have been collected."

Mark Heinz Heinz Landscape and Construction Glenview, IL

The myth that grasscycling creates too much thatch is erroneous. In reality over-fertilizing, over-watering, and cutting too much of the grass blade causes stems, roots, and partially decomposed matter to build up on the top of the soil. The rapid decomposition of the tiny clippings produced by grasscycling helps to actually prevent thatch from developing.

Earthworms, beneficial insects, and microorganisms actually improve the quality of your soil and your lawn. Finely-chopped clippings, even leaves, make an excellent meal for these creatures and are quickly broken down, releasing valuable elements and humus to the soil. This is a natural

way to a greatlooking lawn.

> "We've been in the business 62 years, cutting large, private estates for some very particularly people. started mulching four years ago. Now we mulch yearround, and I think lawns are better for it. We've

reduced our fertilizer needs, we're using less chemicals, and are seeing more earthworms. Mulching works wonders. With few employees, I've cut a lot of expenses. It really helps the bottom line."

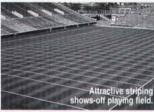
Bill Antilety Jacob Antilety Landscaping, Inc. Long Island, NY

Photo courtesy: John Deere

Mulching bad for your lawn? Remember the facts. Mulching creates waste reduction, water conservation, a healthier soil, and keeps nutrients in the soil. With the right equipment, the finished cut produced by mulching can be picture-perfect.

John Cloutier is the National Marketing Manager for Exmark Mfg. Co., Inc.







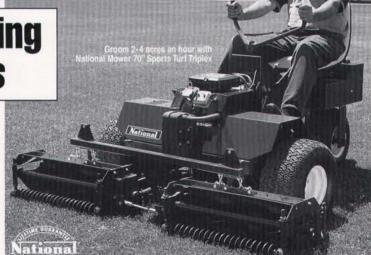
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