

Yard Smart Resources

City of Lincoln Recycling Office

Phone: 441-8215

Web site: www.lincoln.ne.gov
— keyword “compost”

Recycling Hotline; Information on Managing Yard Waste, backyard composting, and much more; LinGro compost and wood chip availability.

UNL Extension in Lancaster County

Phone: 441-7180

Web site: lancaster.unl.edu
Educational resources on backyard composting, grasscycling, lawn chemical use, and much more.

Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department

Phone: 441-8040

Disposal Lawn Chemicals, Complaints on Backyard Composting

Lincoln Solid Waste Management Association

Phone: 475-8376

Yard Waste Collection

Nebraska Department of Agriculture

Phone: 471-2394

Information on certification for private and commercial pesticide applicators

The Water Center

472-3305

Water Conservation

Yard Waste Disposal Options

Garden waste, weeds, brush and tree trimmings over 1-inch in diameter can be deposited in the regular trash throughout the year. The following options are available to Lincoln residents for grass and leaf materials.

48TH STREET TRANSFER STATION — For a fee, residents may dispose of grass and leaves at the 48th Street Transfer Station located approximately 1/2 mile north of 48th & Superior Streets. Grass and leaves must be free of garbage, litter and tree trimmings over 1-inch in diameter. Grass and leaves must be removed from plastic bags at the transfer station. Call 441-7738 for more information.

HIRING A LAWN CARE SERVICE — Include yard waste management in your lawn care package.

HIRING A PRIVATE HAULER — Lincoln refuse haulers offer a separate weekly pick up of yard waste to be taken to a city-operated compost site for a fee. Contact your hauler for more information. Use approved paper lawn bags available from retailers, a cart provided by the hauler, or a clean, 32-gallon trash can with a lid. Grass and leaves in plastic bags are NOT allowed at the city's compost site (plastic will not decompose in the compost mixture).

Tips to Reduce Yard Waste

Yard waste can account for 20 percent of the total waste stream. Nebraska regulations prohibit sending grass and leaves to landfills during the growing season, from April 1 to November 30. By reducing or removing this waste source, the Lancaster County landfill life will be extended by 3 to 5 years. Homeowners and grounds managers can reduce yard waste with these good landscape practices.

Appropriate Landscape Design

With appropriate landscape design and plant selection, the landscape waste stream can be significantly reduced, in turn reducing the overall waste stream.

PLANT SELECTION — An effective way to reduce waste by design is by designing the landscape based on anticipated use (turf vs. shrubbery), and then purchasing plants requiring less maintenance and water.

CHOOSE GROUND COVERS — The installation of perennial ground covers can be an attractive alternative to

turf and result in a reduction in waste.

TURF SELECTION — If turf is selected, choose dwarf or other slow growing varieties requiring less water.

CHOOSE PERENNIALS — The use of perennials can give year-round color without the cost and waste of replacing annual plants.

MINIMIZE PRUNING NEEDS — Certain trees and shrubs, most often those slow growing or drought tolerant, need little or no pruning and produce less waste. Choose plants fitting the

available space in order to minimize pruning needs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

These University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension NebGuide publications are available at the extension office or online at <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu>

- “Growing Annual Flowers” (G721)
- “Turf in the Landscape” (G1418)
- “Perennial Flowers for Water-Wise Gardeners” (G1214)
- “Woody Landscape Plants: Selection and Planting” (G1349)

Grasscycling Has Multiple Benefits

Grasscycling, or grass mulching, is the natural practice of leaving clippings on the lawn when mowing. It is obvious how this practice can save resources such as landfill space, but there are additional benefits as well. The clippings quickly decompose, returning nutrients to the soil. Grasscycling, in conjunction with the practice of reducing water and fertilizer inputs, can reduce mowing time in addition to disposal costs.

Grasscycling can be practiced on any healthy lawn as long as responsible turf management guidelines are followed. Proper mowing, watering, and fertilizing practices result in more moderate turf growth yet still produce a healthy, green lawn.

The nitrogen contained in grass clippings removed from a lawn almost equals the recommended application rate for healthy turf (about five pounds of nitrogen per year per 1,000 square feet). While some of this nitrogen is lost through the decomposition of the clippings, leaving the clippings on the lawn by grasscycling can have the overall impact of reducing fertilization requirements by 15–25% or more. Similar savings on water use are possible.

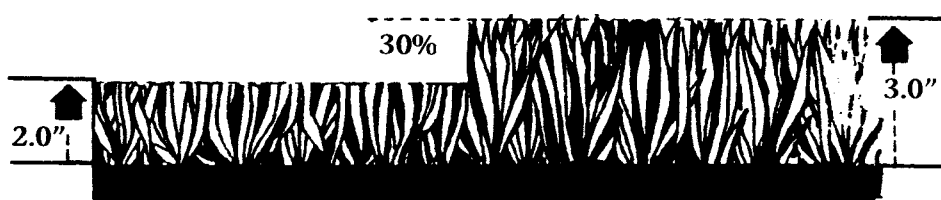
Returning clippings to the lawn usually means mowing more than once a week during the few weeks of rapid



growth in spring and early summer. Grass clippings should be less than one inch, or no more than one-third of the total plant height, to ensure rapid decomposition. Mowing more frequently is not as much extra work as you might think, because lawns mowed at the proper height cut more easily and quickly. Mowing infrequently damages the lawn by removing too much of the plant at one time. When mowed regularly, clippings filter down through the grass, decompose rapidly and recycle nutrients back into the soil.

Grasscycling Saves Lawn Care Costs

- **Fertilizer** — Grass clippings can supply up to one-third of a lawn's nitrogen fertilizer needs.
- **Time** — Recent trials confirmed leaving grass clippings on the lawn saves one-third of the mowing time.
- **Water use** — Clippings shade grass roots, cool the soil, return moisture, add moisture holding organic matter, and thereby reduce lawn watering needs.
- **Soil health** — Clippings decompose rapidly, feeding soil organisms that keep soil healthy and help prevent turf diseases.
- **Thatch** — Studies prove grass clippings do not cause thatch build-up.



Remove no more than 30% of the leaf with each mowing.

Mulching Tree Leaves into Lawns

The changing colors of Fall inevitably land in people's yards. When there are many trees on the grounds, leaf clean-up can be a time-consuming chore. Composting leaves requires a home compost pile or the expense of collection, bagging and a means of transport to a compost center.

Another means of disposal is simply mowing the turf/tree leaves with a rotary mower often enough to pulverize the leaves so they fall into the turf. Returning the leaves to the turf is not harmful to the grass **if the mulching/mowing is done at appropriate times.**

It is best if the tree leaves are “mowed” regularly, not allowing them

to lie on the turf more than three or four days. When oak leaves are predominant, it will be necessary to mulch them into the turf later in the fall because they are held on the trees longer than most other trees.

It is important to **use a rotary mower** that pulverizes the leaves well and that the **leaves are dry** when mowed. Leave the mower set at the same height as you have been mowing the turf. Sharpening the mower blades and a slow movement with the mower will help to grind the leaves finer. It may be necessary to make as many as three or four passes over the area to grind the leaves fine enough. The finer the leaf

particles, the more easily they fall into the turf, leaving grass blades exposed to the sunlight.

The pulverized leaves will settle into the turf within a day or two, particularly if followed by rain. Take care that the pulverized leaves do not cover the grass blades entirely. Fall is a very important time for the turf to photosynthesize and store carbohydrates, particularly under trees where the turf receives limited sunlight during the summer.

It is suggested to add 1/2 pound nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in addition to the normal fall nitrogen fertilization to enhance decomposition of the tree leaves.