

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

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.

Take the “Waste” Out of Yard Waste

Routine lawn and yard maintenance is usually on every homeowner's to-do list. Keeping the lawn neat and green can become a neighborhood goal, with everyone competing for the title of “best-kept lawn.” Reducing resources and minimizing waste in a landscape should be another worthy goal.

Reducing yard “waste” is the route more people are taking, while finding more satisfaction in routine yard care at the same time. Here's how you can reduce yard “waste” and transform it into yard “wealth.”

Use Organic Mulches — Recycle leaves, wood chips, grass clippings and other yard trimmings as mulch to retain soil moisture, reduce weed growth, moderate daily and seasonal soil temperatures and reduce soil erosion.

Plant Ground Covers — Reduce impractical lawn areas (steep slopes, shady areas, low spots) and keep tree roots moist and cool. Less lawn means fewer grass clippings. It also can reduce the amount of pesticide and fertilizer use.

Direct Down Spouts into Planting Beds or Lawns — Reduce runoff from down spouts directed onto paved surfaces which can contribute pollutants to lakes and streams. Redirect this precious natural resource to your yard rather than the pavement.

Try Natural Landscaping — Naturalize at least a portion of your yard to reduce maintenance, grass clippings, pesticide and fertilizer usage. Enjoy the attractive alternatives as your property contributes to a richer ecosystem.

Landscaping the Border of Your Yard — Perimeter plantings provide a convenient place to recycle tree trim-



Reduce impractical lawn areas by using ground covers such as hostas and lamium.

ming, leaves and garden debris. Decomposition is speeded up by cutting twigs and other materials into smaller pieces.

Select Plants for Proper Size and Vigor — Reduce trimmings by selecting dwarf varieties and always plan for the natural height of trees and shrubs before planting. Pest-resistant varieties reduce both chemical usage and the dead wood from diseased plants. Match plants to proper climate, soil, light conditions and topography.

Manage Lawn Areas Wisely — Proper care keeps lawns growing vigorously, which greatly reduces disease and pesticide use.

Fertilize Conservatively and Carefully — Test the soil and reduce fertilizer use to avoid excessive plant growth which contributes to potential

yard waste. Reuse fertilizer spilled on paved surfaces which will otherwise pollute lakes and streams via runoff water.

Use Leaves as a Resource — Small amounts of leaves, when shredded with a lawn mower, can be recycled as an organic nutrient source if left on the lawn. This reduces the frequency of raking. Leaves can be reused to mulch perimeter plantings or as an ingredient in compost.

Plan and Evaluate Your Yard — Reconsidering your routines may require a little time and discipline — as opposed to proceeding as usual. But good, environmentally-friendly ideas should emerge. The key is to lessen the waste problem in some way by first rethinking, then reduce, reuse and recycle.

Yard Waste Disposal Options

Garden waste, weeds, brush and tree trimmings over 1-inch in diameter can be disposed of 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).

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.

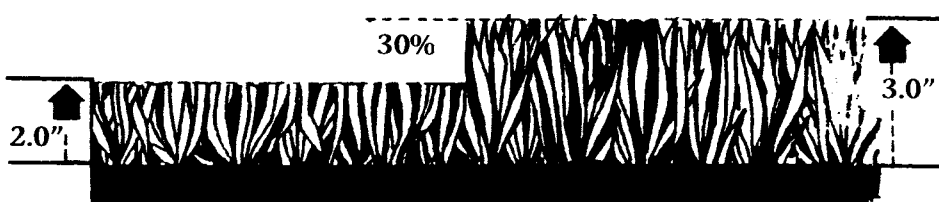
Returning clippings to the lawn usually means mowing more than once a week during the few weeks of rapid growth in spring and early summer. Grass clippings should be less than one inch, or no more than one-third of the total plant height, to ensure rapid decomposition. Mowing more frequently is not as 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.



Veiki Jedlicka, UNL Extension in Lancaster County

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.