

Proper Mowing for a Healthy Lawn

Mowing Practices are a major contributor to the health of your turf. Proper irrigation is the other big one, which most homeowners understand the importance of. However, mowing your lawn correctly is equally important in many ways. How you care for the top growth affects the root system which in turn affects what you see on the surface. The challenge is that we don't control the mowing practices—you as a homeowner do, or your mowing company. Here are several important guidelines for proper mowing of your lawn which will help your lawn to look and perform its best.



Mow with a Clean, Sharp Blade. A dull blade will tear up the grass blade and shear it off rather than cutting it. This gives the turf a bleached, tan appearance due to the rough edges. The rough edges also provide openings for turf fungus disease to come in and infect the plants. We recommend that your lawnmower blades be sharpened at least twice a year (assuming your lawn is the only one being mowed with it). Professional mowing companies should be using sharp blades at all times.

Never Remove More than 1/3rd of the leaf blade. Removing too much of the leaf blade is one of the most abused mowing practices that can negatively affect how your turf performs. By not mowing frequently enough and by removing too much of the grass blade when mowing, the grass plant puts most of its energy into re-growing that leaf at the expense of the root system. So with the root system shut down, the plant cannot absorb water and nutrients as well, and plant's health suffers. By removing too much of the green blade, the exposed turf is not as green because it was shaded more by the leaves. Excessive clippings also can cause thatch problems to develop. Many factors such as rainfall, temperature, fertility, and turf type determine how frequently you should mow your lawn. Sometimes during certain higher growth periods you may not be able to last one week without mowing. And for sure, don't try to extend it out to every 10 days or two weeks, because your turf will suffer. To help keep turf growth more manageable, consider Primo turfgrass growth regulator applied during high growth periods, such as summertime (for bermudagrass).

Mow at the Proper Mowing Height. We generally recommend mowing at a higher height than what many people practice. Bermudagrass and zoysia grass can generally be mowed at about 1.5 inches. Fescue should never be mowed that short—rather 3 to 3.5 inches high. There are certain fine-bladed bermudagrass varieties such as Tiffway which can be mowed shorter to about 1/2 inch, but only with a reel mower. The higher you mow the grass, the deeper the root system will grow, which is what we want. A deeper root system will absorb water and nutrients more efficiently, and lead to a healthier turf. If you mow too short, the root system will be very shallow, leading to increased watering demands, so we recommend raising your mowing height some. We generally recommend mowing bermudagrass at 1.5 inches in spring, raise it to 2.5 inches in the summer, and even 3 inches in fall. Keeping the bermudagrass turf high during winter dormant periods will help insulate the turf crown and roots from harsh winter temperatures which could potentially lead to winterkill. The higher the turf is mowed--the deeper and more extensive the root system. Grass-Cycle your clippings by returning your grass clippings back to the turf and you'll be recycling valuable nutrients and organic material back into the soil. As long as you follow the "1/3rd rule" in mowing, and don't remove too much of the grass with each mowing, you will be able to leave the clippings on the turf. This does not contribute to thatch problems, as long as you mow frequently enough.