

MOWING YOUR TURF

Mowing is one of the three primary cultural practices that are used to sustain turfgrass growth. Mowing that is consistent and frequent can help develop a turf grass stand that is dense, of fine texture, more resistant to insects and diseases and become more drought tolerant due to the establishment of deeper root zones. Some frequent questions include:

How high should I mow my turf? The actual height of the turf is dependant on the turf species. Country Green Turf Farms 'Perfect Green' turf is a mix of three species that performs best when maintained at a height ranging from 1 ½ inches to 2 ½ inches. If you maintain your lawn at heights above this range the turf may present a more ragged, natural look. These heights are usually in areas that require less maintenance requirements and aesthetic demands are minimal. As you reach the lower part of the range and below, our 'Perfect Green' species respond with increased density, finer texture and improved playability. However, lower cutting heights also produce some potential negative side effects. These include crown tissue damage (scalping), increase potential for diseases, reduced carbohydrate reserves, less root mass, increased temperatures at the soil-plant interface and the reduction of photosynthetic area.

How often should I mow my turf? Some say that once per week is how often a lawn should be mowed. However, the determination of when the grass should be cut must be based on grass growth and the underlying functions of grass growth. These include time of year, grass species, intensity of use and maintenance practices. A good rule of thumb is the '1/3 rule'. This rule states that no more than one-third of the grasses top growth should be removed at any one mowing. This rule provides a balance between the benefits of frequent mowing (increased density, regrowth) and the negative consequences of too frequent mowing (decreased shoot and root growth, depleted carbohydrate reserves, and a weakened, stress intolerant plant).

Should I collect my grass clippings? Whether you remove the clippings or not depends on a few, specific factors. First, if the turf stand is intensively maintained with closely mown surfaces with specific functional activities (sports fields) the clippings should be removed to maintain appearance and playability. Second, so long as the turf is mowed in a regular and consistent manner in which the amount of top growth is minimal, the clippings may be left. If, however, the clippings are larger than normal due to infrequent mowing the clippings should be removed. Regardless, the fertility program should be altered to account for either the increase of nutrients (leaving the clippings) or the absence of nutrients from the organic material.

What type of mower should I use? The best mower you can use is a sharp mower. The differences between a rotary mower and a reel mower are technical and are apparent in intensely maintained turf grass applications. For the majority of uses, the type is not as relevant as the sharpness. A dull mower will damage the ends of the leaves causing brown, ragged ends and allow for increased disease development.

How soon after my turf is installed should I mow it? While we were growing the turf, we maintained your turf at 2 inches. We mowed your turf just prior to harvest and delivery. Due to this recent mowing and the ‘shock’ grass experiences, your turf should be mowed between 5 – 7 days after installation. When you mow, take care on turns as the grass may not be firmly rooted and the rotation of the mower may displace, and damage, the turf. After the first mowing, begin a regular and consistent program using the 1/3 rule.