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GRASS RECYCLING – CUT IT & LEAVE IT!

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Everyone's grass is really starting to grow now! Driving around town I've noticed most lawns are already on their 2nd or 3rd cut of the year.

The Middlesex County Improvement Authority's Recycling Division has launched its annual "grasscycling" campaign in sync with the region's mowing season. Lawn experts at Rutgers University and other research centers have found that short grass clippings left on your lawn act as a natural fertilizer, producing a healthier lawn that greens up earlier in the spring and stays green later into the fall. The research also found the grass clippings shelter the tender grass roots from the sun and conserve moisture, help to create a thicker, healthier lawn that is more resistant to weeds & certain lawn diseases. "Grasscycling" DOES NOT cause thatch. Short clippings decompose within a few days.

Grasscycling saves your time. Experts say we spend as much as 35% of our mowing time getting rid of the clippings: emptying the mower bag, raking, filling the lawn waste bags and bringing them to our compost yard. Grasscycling also decreases the need to fertilize your lawn thus saving you money. By grasscycling you only need to fertilize once or twice per year.

If you have no other choice but to bag the clippings, you can use them as mulch around plants and in your garden to reduce weed growth or add them to your compost pile. These tips and other tips can be found at the Middlesex County Improvement Authority's website at www.mciauth.com or by calling 1-800-488-MCIA (6242).

There is no excuse for sweeping grass and/or leaves into the storm drains or waterways. Stormwater runoff from lawn maintenance is a contributor to water pollution. It can harm bodies of water by increasing the levels of sediment & suspended solids, which lower the oxygen levels in water bodies creating poor water quality. Just blowing grass clippings out into the street has the same result, since they will wash into the storm drains in the next heavy rain. It hurts the water quality in our streams, etc., and it is illegal. What this means is the grass decreases the oxygen levels as it decays, and it increases the biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) in the streams, etc., as it decays.

BOD is the amount of oxygen used by microorganisms in the biological process of metabolizing organic matter in water. The more organic matter there is (e.g., in sewage and polluted bodies of water), the greater the BOD, and the greater BOD, the lower the amount of dissolved oxygen available for higher animals such as fish. One of the main reasons for treating wastewater prior to its discharge into a water resource is to lower its BOD – i.e., reduce its need of oxygen and thereby lessen its demand from the streams, lakes, rivers, or estuaries into which it is released. (Credit: The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica)

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