

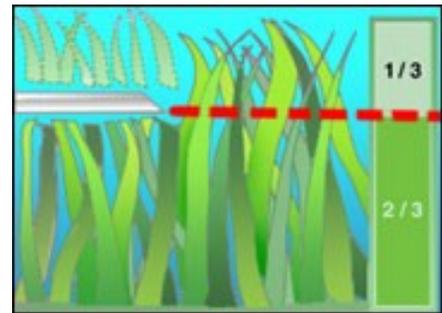
Return Your Clippings

Yard waste, such as grass clippings, leaves and branches are a valuable landscape resource when composted. Grass clippings do not need to be collected and can actually benefit the turf by returning nutrients and organic matter to the soil.

Grass clippings returned to the lawn provide up to 25 percent of your lawn's total fertilizer needs. Clippings contain about 4 percent nitrogen, 2 percent potassium and 1 percent phosphorus. While decomposing, they also serve indirectly as a food source for the bacteria in the soil, which are doing many beneficial things (such as decomposing thatch) for a healthy turf environment.

Figure 1

Grass should be mowed tall and clippings should be returned to the lawn to produce a healthy lawn. Set your mower at a tall setting so clippings easily fall into the lawn. Set your mower at 3" or higher and mow frequently so you remove no more than one-third (about 1 inch) of the total plant height.



Regular mowing with a sharp blade is essential for reducing the need to collect clippings. Grass must be mowed often enough so that no more than a third (about 1 inch) of the vertical grass height is removed with each cutting. This does not mean you should leave an excessive amount of clippings piled on the lawn surface after you mow. Leaving too many clippings will damage the lawn.

When you set your mower at a higher cutting height, the grass plant produces a deep and efficient root system that can reduce the need for watering (Figure 2). Taller mowing also helps to "shade out" many weeds.

When the lawn is heavily diseased, removing clippings can help to decrease the population level of disease organisms. Clippings can still be used for compost. If the lawn must be mowed when wet or excessively tall, clippings will mat together and may need to be bagged.

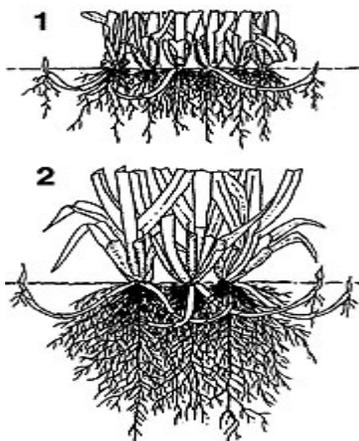


Figure 2

A comparison of turfgrass mowed at two heights.

The closer-mowed turfgrass has fewer roots and uses water inefficiently

The higher-mowed turfgrass has a more extensive root system and is more drought resistant.



Weed Control: Fact and Fiction

Weeds are not indiscriminate vagabonds that appear in a lawn in order to vex homeowners. The appearance of excessive weeds is an indicator of deeper problems within your lawn.

Most lawn companies rely entirely on broadleaf herbicides for weed control. This is effective only on the surface, as it fails to address the underlying conditions which encourage weed growth. Additionally, the broadleaf herbicide used by many companies contains the active ingredient Dicamba. This chemical leaches through the soil to attack not only your dandelions, but your trees and shrubs as well.

Limited use of broadleaf herbicides which do **not** contain Dicamba are acceptable in most lawns, as long as they are not the primary means of weed control. Your lawn care plan will contain an integrated pest management program which generally includes aeration and seeding, tips on mowing and watering, and a recommendation for spot spraying the few weeds which may still appear from time to time.

The only way to maintain a 100% weed free lawn is through multiple indiscriminate applications of herbicide every year. However, a well managed, vigorous, healthy lawn will keep weeds out on its own. Our aim is 90-95% weed free.

Aeration and Seeding

Compacted soil is a major factor contributing to weeds. Weeds are opportunistic, thriving where grass is thin or unable to grow. In many cases aeration tips the balance in favor of your grass.

In addition to alleviating soil compaction, aeration can help encourage root growth, aid your lawn in the break-down of thatch, and help create a healthy thriving ecosystem in your yard.

Seeding goes hand in hand with aeration. When seeding is completed in conjunction with aeration new varieties of grass are introduced into your lawn. These grass types are often more vital, disease resistant and drought tolerant than previously developed varieties. This will also help fill in bare spots more quickly, and result in thicker healthier grass.

The Truth About Watering

Proper watering encourages deep and extensive root systems, while poor watering practices encourage shallow root systems and a high maintenance lawn. When water is applied frequently in small doses shallow root systems develop, making your lawn less drought tolerant, and more prone to disease and other stresses. Over watering also increases the thatch layer and encourages moisture loving weeds.

As a general rule it is best to water infrequently and deeply. In most cases 1 to 1 1/2 inches of water applied at one time will soak your soil to a depth of 6 to 10 inches. Ask your Rainbow LawnCare consultant to make recommendations for your lawn and soil type.

Mowing the Right Way

Mowing height directly influences the depth of a root system. When grass is mown too short, it encourages shallow root systems and all the problems that go with them. A mowing height of 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches will encourage a deep healthy root system. Optimal mowing height does vary between grass varieties. Ask your Rainbow consultant what is the right height for your lawn.

When mowing do not take more than 1/3 of the leaf blade. Grasses are plants, and thusly make their own food through photosynthesis. When too much of the plant is removed, your grass will expend its energy trying to replace the photosynthetic area instead of focusing on root growth. If your lawn has gone too long, try mowing several times with a space of a day or two in between.

Mowing is a brutal action. If mower blades are not sharp, grass blades are bruised and torn instead of cleanly cut. This is an added stress on your grass, and can frequently lead to browning around the frayed edges. Damage can be minimized by always using a sharpened blade. If you don't know how to sharpen your mower blade, check your owner's manual or contact the manufacturing company.

Questions?

Don't hesitate to [contact us](#) with any of your lawn care questions!

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