### Table 1. Recommended Mowing Heights for Grasscycling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grass Type</th>
<th>Mower Setting (inches)</th>
<th>Mow when grass reaches this height (inches)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bermudagrass (common)</td>
<td>1 - 1 1/2</td>
<td>1 1/2 - 2 1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bermudagrass (hybrid)</td>
<td>1/2 - 1</td>
<td>3/4 - 1 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Bluegrass</td>
<td>1 1/2 - 2 1/2</td>
<td>2 1/4 - 3 3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kikuyugrass</td>
<td>1 - 1 1/2</td>
<td>1 1/2 - 2 1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perennial Ryegrass</td>
<td>1 1/2 - 2 1/2</td>
<td>2 1/4 - 3 3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall Fescue</td>
<td>1 1/2 - 3</td>
<td>2 1/4 - 4 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Augustinegrass</td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>1 1/2 - 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoysiagrass</td>
<td>1/2 - 1 1/2</td>
<td>3/4 - 2 1/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you grasscycle remember that too much water and fertilizer can increase growth and require even more frequent mowings. See the Lawn Watering Guide of the Garden Information Series for more information about correctly watering your lawn.

Ask your nursery or garden center professional for additional information and assistance about mulching and composting.

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USE GRASS CLIPPINGS AND YARD TRIMMINGS FOR COMPOST AND MULCH

Compost fresh grass clippings, leaves, shrub and tree trimmings, and other “green waste” from your garden and yard for soil amendments or use them directly without composting as mulch. Composts and mulches enhance the health and productivity of your garden and yard as well as divert a large amount of bulky materials from ever-diminishing landfills.

Compost is soft, dark, and crumbly, and results from decomposition of organic materials like garden and yard green waste. Compost is beneficial when worked into the soil to increase drainage and water- and nutrient-holding capacity. It also supplies a small amount of nutrients for your plants.

Mulch lawns by “grasscycling,” simply leaving the mowed clippings on the lawn rather than bagging them. If you grasscycle, mow at least twice a week at slightly less than the recommended height (see Table 1.). The basic grass-cycling rule is mow often enough so that one-third or less of the growth is removed each time. Contrary to popular belief, grasscycling does not lead to excessive thatch build-up in your lawn.

The authors are Donald R. Hodel, Environmental Horticulturist, University of California Cooperative Extension, Los Angeles and Janet S. Hartin, Environmental Horticulture Advisor, University of California Cooperative Extension, San Bernardino.

YARD TRIMMINGS

Compost is beneficial when worked into the soil to increase drainage and water- and nutrient-holding capacity. It also supplies a small amount of nutrients for your plants.

As composting:
- Materials compost best if they are between 1/2 to 1-1/2 inches in size. Watery, succulent material can be larger but twigs, small branches, and other woody material take longer to decay if not chopped into small pieces before adding them to the pile.
- Try to have an equal amount of green material (fresh grass, green prunings, fresh vegetables and fruits) and dried material (dead leaves, dried grass, and woody prunings) in the pile.
- Keep the pile evenly moist. Too much water slows decomposition and encourages strong odors. Too little water slows or prevents decomposition.
- Microorganisms decomposing the materials supply heat, which is critical for rapid composting. To prevent heat loss and to build up the amount of necessary heat (160°F), the pile should be at least 3 x 3 x 3 feet. A plastic cover on top of the pile helps to retain heat (keep the sides of the pile open, though, for aeration).
- Turn the pile at least once a week to prevent it from getting too hot and killing the microorganisms responsible for decomposition. Turn material on the outside of the pile into the inside. Turning also aerates the pile, supplying much-needed oxygen for decomposition. Turn material on the outside of the pile into the inside. Turning also aerates the pile, supplying much-needed oxygen for decomposition.
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The time required for composted materials to be ready for use is mostly dependent on how often the pile is turned, and it can vary from as little as three weeks to as long as a year. Generally, the more often the pile is turned, the faster the material will decompose. If turned every two days, the pile will be ready in about three weeks. If never turned, the pile will take about a year to decompose. Other factors also affect how fast the pile will decompose. Here are some tips for rapid and successful composting:

- Materials compost best if they are between 1/2 to 1-1/2 inches in size. Watery, succulent material can be larger but twigs, small branches, and other woody material take longer to decay if not chopped into small pieces before adding them to the pile.
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 multipurpose containers allow you to have several piles in various states of decomposition, ensuring a year-round supply of compost.

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The compost is then ready to use.

MULCHING

Apply mulches year round. Remove weeds prior to application; then spread material two to four inches thick. Materials settle as they decompose so add fresh clippings, leaves, and trimmings periodically to maintain the appropriate thickness. Keep mulches two to four inches away from trunks of trees and shrubs. For best appearance, materials for mulch should be one to two inches long and not more than an inch thick. Let fresh grass clippings dry out prior to using them as mulch. Avoid using any materials sprayed with pesticides, especially if mulching with them around food plants.

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