

Carrier's TURF PROS LAWN CARE

Lawn Clippings

Returning clipping to your lawn will provide a minimal amount of nutrients to your soil. The nitrogen levels you need for your lawn are approximately 3 .5 lbs/1000 sq/ft. per year. Lawn clippings will provide a very small fraction of this and will build up a thatch layer in your soil. Thatch builds a barrier between the soil surface and root zone causing water infiltration problems, nutrient infiltration problems and a potential breeding ground for lawn disease. If you did not have a fertilization program, returning clippings would be better than nothing, but you have a professional lawn care company metering out macro and micro nutrients to your lawn throughout the year. This is why we suggest bagging your clippings.

There are two trains of thought when it comes to lawn clippings – either leave them on the lawn to return to the soil or take them right away. But which is truly the right option?

A natural lawn generates oxygen for us to breath and it creates a cool surface to sit or play on. It also produces lots and lots of clippings over the course of a year. What is the best way to deal with lawn clippings?



The case for leaving lawn clippings on the lawn

Some people like to let clippings fall back onto the lawn. The dead plant material is pulled into the soil and broken down by minibeasts and microbes to make plant food. It's recycling just as nature intended.

Returning clippings to the lawn only really works well if you are only cutting a very little bit of the grass blade off – and if the grass is relatively dry.

I remember sitting in a classroom watching a tractor and gang mowers cut the school playing field. It smelled divine but it did leave a lot of debris behind. Huge clumps of clippings and if the weather was wet, it would be huge soggy lumps that congealed and gradually turned brown leaving dead patches on the surface of the grass. On grass cutting day, the boys couldn't wait for play time so they could run outside and throw grass at each other. That was OK for a primary school field. It wouldn't work on a stadium or on an ornamental lawn.

On a garden lawn, it's really for you to use your discretion. There's a rhyme to remember here "If it's dry, let them fly"

In other words, short dry clippings on a hot day won't do any harm if you let them fall onto the lawn. In fact some say they help to conserve moisture. If the grass is long or wet (or both) it's better to remove the clippings. Either rake them up after mowing (good exercise!) or pop the grass box on the mower.

Reasons to remove grass clippings

We've already touched on the aesthetics of leaving grass clippings on the lawn – great clumps are unattractive and they will leave discoloured patches.

How about the health of the lawn? Too much dead matter in the bottom of the sward can build up a layer of thatch. Thatch slows down drainage, making it harder for rainwater to soak through to where the roots need it. Thatch can also harbour diseases such as Fusarium patch. That's why professional greenkeepers scarify their pitches, greens and stadia at least once a year...it's to remove thatch.

By removing clippings you will slow down (but never stop) the formation of the thatch layer. Your lawn will look neater and your shoes will stay cleaner when you walk across the lawn.