



Cutting your lawn too short creates an environment for both weed and disease infestation. It also causes the lawn to lose moisture much quicker.

Keep your mower blades sharp. Sharp blades produce a clean, even cut. Unsharpened blades rip or tear the grass tissue. This often leaves a tan or brown cast to the lawn after mowing. The ripping or tearing can create a breeding ground for disease and other problems.

Leave your grass clippings on the lawn. This is called grass-cycling, recycling, or mulching. Clippings are full of nutrients and can actually reduce your need for fertilizers by as much as 25 percent. Grass clippings readily break down and will only cause an issue if the quantity is excessive.

Mulching (recycling or grasscycling) mowers are great at making the clippings small enough to disperse into the grass canopy. But even standard discharge mowers will not cause a clipping problem if you follow the one-third rule. And, leaving the clippings on the lawn helps the environment by keeping clippings out of our community landfills!

Change directions each time you mow. Mowing causes the grass blades to 'bend' in the direction the mower travels. The light and dark sections (patterns) you see on sports fields are created by light reflecting off the grass blades. As you face the field, the turf appears light where the mower traveled away from you; dark where the mower traveled toward you. When you alternate directions with each mowing, the grass does not lie over excessively. Changing the mowing pattern also reduces wear and compaction by changing the areas traveled.

## MOWING BASICS

Mowing is the periodic cutting of a turfgrass lawn to a specified height. For low maintenance, little compares to live turfgrass. You mow more often, yet spend less time mowing than weeding or pruning.

Mowing is the most common cultural practice used on lawns around the world. It's the most frequently repeated aspect of landscape care. Thus some think it takes more time than other outdoor tasks. Facts prove otherwise. It takes just 30 minutes to mow the average home lawn. Average is 10,000 square feet (929 square meters) of turfgrass. You will spend only 11 hours annually when mowing once a week during a seven-month growing season using a 19-inch (48.26 cm), walk-behind rotary (or reel) mower.

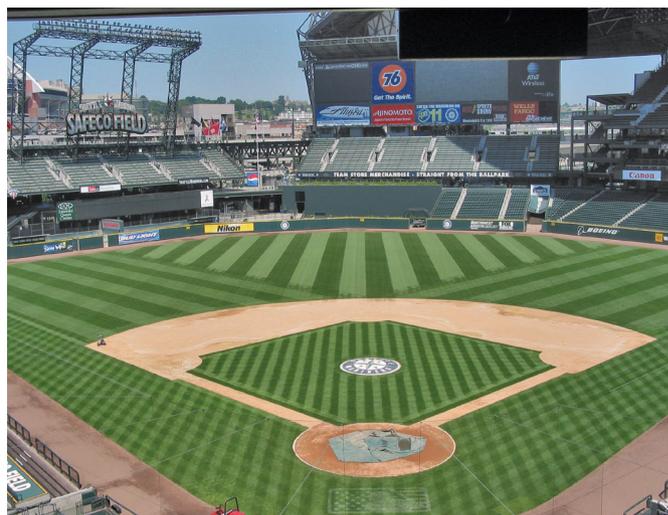
Use a larger mower to further reduce mowing time. With a 60-inch (152.4 cm), commercial mower you can easily cut 30 square feet (2.787 square meters) a second. At even half that efficiency, and mowing 15 times a year, large areas require only one second per square foot (.093 square meters), per year.

Mowing is always a stress on the grass plants but the ability to tolerate mowing is one of the criteria that separate turfgrass from the rest of the grass species. But, just because turfgrass can tolerate mowing does not mean the grass likes it. Reduce that stress by adopting these practices.

Mow early in the morning or, even better, in the evening. Mowing during the heat of the day can cause the plant to go into shock. Mow when the grass is dry. Your mower will work better and there is less likelihood that disease will be spread from plant to plant.

Follow the one-third rule. Select a mowing height appropriate for the turfgrass species in your lawn. Then set your mower blade height of cut and mow frequently enough so you cut off no more than the top third of the grass plant. This will encourage stronger roots.

Photo by Steve Trusty



Those elaborate patterns on sports fields are created with a lawn mower.

*For more information on lawn care and helpful "How to" tips, visit The Lawn Institute at <http://www.TheLawnInstitute.org>.*