



# CUT AND LEAVE IT : A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR HELPING MAKE THE HILLSBOROUGH COMMUNITY SUSTAINABLE FOR THE FUTURE

## How to Cut and Leave it

1. Allow your grass to grow to three inches or higher and then cut no more than one inch off the top. This is the one-third rule. This helps develop a deeper root system which is a natural defence against weeds, disease and drought.
2. During fast growing periods you may have to cut the grass every four to seven days.



## Benefits

- Benefits the environment by reducing the amount and frequency of fertilizer application. Grass clippings are 80% water and retain 2-4% nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and other nutrients. This is also good for lowering fertilizer costs
- Improves your lawn. Leaving grass clippings on the lawn returns nutrients to the soil resulting in healthier turf.
- Saves time. Since the grass is no longer bagged, fewer stops in your process are necessary
- Reduces the amount of garbage you throw out. Grass clippings can account for as much as 10% of the garbage we produce.

## Compost other Lawn Debris

If you don't want to leave grass clippings on your lawn, try backyard composting. Composting your organic wastes in the backyard is simple and beneficial. There are many methods to backyard composting ranging from a simple pile to a purchased composting bin.

In addition to grass clippings, leaves collected from your lawn in the fall season can be composted and repurposed into soil conditioner in the garden. This is the simplest approach to getting rid of leaves with minimal effort.

To compost easily, create a compost heap made by forming a circle using a 15' of snow fencing or 2" x4" welded wire fencing. Either type is available from local stores. The finished circle will be about 4' high by approximately 5' wide. For quicker decomposition, consider spreading the leaves in layers about 6" deep. Add a commercial fertilizer, such as 10-10-10, about a half or 1 cup to each 10 square feet. Then sprinkle a few shovels of soil and keep moist.



## FAQs of Cut and Leave it

- **Do grass clippings cause thatch?** No, thatch is an accumulation of the "woody" parts of the grass plant: stems, roots and stolons, not the clippings. Thatch is most often caused by over watering or over fertilizing.
- **Isn't it more work to mow the lawn often enough to keep the clippings short?** No, cutting grass before it is overgrown is easier and faster. Eliminating the time and effort it takes to bag clippings further shortens the mowing time.
- **What if my lawn grows too high between mowing to leave the clippings?** You may mow over the clippings to further shred and scatter them. You may, also, raise the mower height so only the top third of the grass blade is removed and then gradually lower the mower height over the span of several mowings.
- **Do you need a mulching mower to do this?** No, mulching blades and adapter kits are available for many types of lawn mowers.



## Resources

Leave it on the Lawn: Grass recycling. (2015). Albany, NY: Cornell Cooperative Extension

## Introduction

Today, grass clippings are a major part of New Jersey's municipal waste stream. As a Hillsborough Township resident, you are already helping to avoid air pollution and wasted resources by recycling lawn clippings and leaves. You can do more by reducing waste at the source. Leave the grass clippings on your lawn when you mow, compost your leave, and let nature do the recycling for you.



## What does it mean to Cut and Leave it?

To maintain your lawn properly, mow high and mow often. The Cut and Leave it method allows mowers to leave their grass clippings behind on the lawn, without gathering them and throwing them away. Most New Jersey lawns should be mowed to 2.5-3.5 inches high. This will shade the soil, cool the roots, and block out weed growth. By mulching or finely chopping the cut, and leaving it on the lawn, the nutrients will restore the health of the soil, without the need for fertilizers. You'll save 20-25% of your time because you won't have to stop and empty your lawnmower bag, and you'll avoid purchasing yard waste bags and hauling them to the curb.

## About

The Hillsborough Township Committee established the Sustainable Hillsborough Steering Committee in 2007 to provide guidance on green and sustainability related issues as the Township pursues a path towards a sustainable future. The Sustainable Hillsborough Steering Committee is comprised of Hillsborough residents who are charged to develop recommendations for strategies to keep the Township moving toward its sustainable goals. The Sustainable Hillsborough Steering Committee will also articulate a long-term vision for the future, educate residents about sustainable development, and provide recommendations to the Township Committee on ways to implement future sustainable practices.

Visit [www.sustainablehillsborough.com](http://www.sustainablehillsborough.com) to learn more about the committee and its mission.



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Hillsborough*

## Cut and Leave it Guide for Residents of Hillsborough Township



Environmentally friendly lawn  
and leave care

*Provided by:  
Hillsborough Township's  
Sustainable Hillsborough Steering Committee*