Reduce Mowing

The Connection

Mowing a lawn is resource-intensive, contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, increases soil loss, harms tree root zones, and is often done in excess. Save some time and improve soil health by mowing the lawn less frequently.

Take Action

Reduce the lawn mowing frequency to no more than once every 2 weeks and earn 1 acorn!

Acorns



Tracks



Instructions

- [ ] Do not mow the lawn more frequently than every two weeks using one of the below options

Reduce Mowing Options

In recent decades, the quest for “perfect” “weedless” lawns has encouraged the reliance on fertilizers that may cause more harm in the long run, and more effort on the part of the lawn keeper, including the frequent mowing required to maintain a *perfect* lawn. Remember that a weed is simply a plant that’s in the wrong place. We encourage you to reconsider the concept of “weeds” and encourage some of the following plants to thrive in the green space.

Mow less

The simplest option is to change nothing about the landscape and just choose to mow less! You can slow the lawn mowing rotation to only twice a month to meet this goal without having to change anything! The lawn is still there, but it is just a touch taller than the previous.

Lawn Alternatives

Clover

Return to the more natural lawns of the early 20th century, when clover was embraced (and youngsters enjoyed making clover chains!) Clover seed was purposefully added to seed blends of cool weather grasses because it helped grasses thrive. There are many benefits when including clover on the lawn:

- Clover is a legume and converts nitrogen into fertilizer, reducing or eliminating the need for additional fertilization.
- White clover is a rapid spreader that crowds out broadleaf weeds while growing harmoniously with grass.
- Clover is among the first plants to green up and thrive in the spring.
- It’s an extremely drought-resistant plant and stays green even during the hottest and driest parts of summer.
- Clover can thrive where there’s poor drainage or shade.

- The flowers bring in bees, butterflies, and beneficial insects that prey on garden pests. (If you are allergic to bee stings, mow the lawn more often when clover is in bloom.)
- Clover endures foot traffic better when combined with lawn grass.
- An all clover lawn is slow-growing and needs mowing only once or twice a year.

If you are ready to welcome clover into the lawn:

- When spreading grass seed, first mow an existing lawn down very low and dethatch the clippings by raking (so that the clover seed can reach the soil). Then add up to 10% of clover seed to the recommended amount of grass seed for a new lawn or for overseeding.
- For a pure clover lawn, about 2 ounces of clover is needed for every 1,000 square feet of lawn. (Lohmiller, 2021).

Other Plants

There are many non-traditional lawns you can plant that are more environmentally friendly than a perfect grass lawn. Once established, most will greatly reduce the maintenance and fertilizer required to thrive. Take into account the amount of sun, moisture, soil type, and traffic as you consider lawn alternatives, and look forward to a more creative green space plus more time to enjoy your non-traditional lawn (Nielsen, 2021).

- **Thyme**: This is a fragrant, very low-growing herb with an abundance of delicate flowers. There are a variety of cultivars suited for a range of soils.

- **Moss**: Consider embracing and expanding the natural moss in your yard. Moss is very soft, and very low height, and never needs mowing. There is a wide range of cultivars, some of which can be purchased and laid similar to turfgrass. Most cultivars prefer some moisture and may need to be weeded from time to time.

- **Green and Gold** (*Chrysogonum virginianum*): this is a low-growing hardy native plant that prefers at least part shade. The cheerful bright yellow blossoms appear from May to October.

- **Phlox** (*Phlox subulata, Phlox divaricata*): are more hardy native evergreen options. Phlox cultivars have a range of blossom colors and heights.

- **Meadow**: check out the "pollinator meadow" goal for more information about adding a meadow

Mowing Notes

While reducing your mowing is all that is needed to meet this goal, a couple of other items are worth considering including choices of the mower and taking special care while mowing around your trees.

Use A More Environmentally Friendly Mower

In years past, the only alternatives to a noisy, polluting gas lawn mower were the manual reel push mower and using an electric mower encumbered by a long electrical cord. No more. The yard appliance industry is now producing much more environmentally-friendly equipment that operates using a rechargeable battery, including
lawnmowers. These are an improvement to air quality, reduce noise pollution, and are easier to use (Puisis, 2021).

Take special care when mowing around trees

Anytime when mowing, take special care to mow gently around your trees. Tree trunks and roots are sensitive to the blades that cut our grass. These gashes can damage trees and lead to their decline.

From Our Partner: Community Foodscapes

"[Community Foodscapes] is a socially-conscious edible landscaping company serving Atlanta by empowering people from all backgrounds to grow food, restore native habitats, and become environmental stewards of their communities." They offer services such as edible landscape consultation, landscape design, garden installation, maintenance, and more!

Find out more at: www.communityfoodscapes.org/

References

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