

Recyclers' Corner



July 2009 Issue

[Editor's Note: Recyclers' Corner is a periodic news column sponsored by Denver Recycles, a program of Denver Public Works/Solid Waste Management. It includes updates on seasonal and ongoing activities related to the City and County of Denver's recycling programs. Editors are invited to publish all or part of the column; however, we request that you run major edits by our staff to ensure accuracy of the information. Questions may be directed to Charlotte Pitt or Tom Strickland at Denver Recycles, 720-865-6815.]

Grasscycle: Feed Your Lawn for Free & Make Less Trash

Eliminate the bagging, hauling and disposal of grass clippings, by leaving them on your lawn. **Grasscycling** can save you a lot of labor and you'll end up with a healthier lawn.

Grasscycling is the practice of leaving grass clippings on your lawn when mowing, instead of bagging them. It's the natural way to recycle grass and provide your lawn with the valuable nutrients and water that it needs.

WHY GRASSCYCLE?

- **Make Less Trash** - Up to 37% of what Denver residents put in the trash during the growing season is yard waste which is predominantly grass clippings. You can significantly reduce your spring and summer waste just by grasscycling.
- **Enjoy a Healthier Lawn** - Grasscycling is a great way to recycle valuable nutrients for free. Clippings break down quickly and slowly release nutrients like Nitrogen back into the soil beneath your lawn.
- **Save Water** - Grasscycling can also help you save on your water bill. Grasscycling reduces the need to water you lawn as often, because grass clippings are made up of more than 50% water, which they return to your lawn as they break down.
- **Reduce Your Work** - Grasscycling can drastically reduce the time you spend on lawn care by eliminating the hassle of bagging, raking and disposing of grass clippings.
- **Save Money** - Grasscycling reduces the amount the City must spend to collect, haul and landfill grass clippings.



YOU CAN GRASSCYCLE SUCCESSFULLY!

1. **Mow you lawn when it's dry**
2. **Keep your mower blades sharp.**
3. **Follow the "1/3 Rule"**- mow you lawn often enough so that no more than 1/3 of the length of the grass blade is cut and left on the lawn. Lawns are most healthy when left a little longer and mowed at 2½ to 3 inches.

You can Grasscycle with any mower (push, electric, gas or mulching). The mower collection bag should be removed to allow clippings to drop on the lawn. However, if for some reason your mower does not have a safety flap covering the opening where the bag fits into the chute, it is important that you purchase a retrofit kit from your hardware store. **If you use a landscape service, ask them to leave the clippings on your lawn.**

Grasscycling does not cause thatch. Thatch is brown, spongy materials consisting of dead grass stems and roots, not the top clippings of the grass. Grass clippings break down quickly and can benefit the worms and organisms that help to maintain healthy soil.

So why not try Grasscycling for a few weeks and see what you think. Your lawn will thank you for it!

For more information on Grasscycling or other Denver Recycles programs, please call 3-1-1 or visit DenverGov.org/DenverRecycles.

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Recycling Myth Busters: Learn the Truth. Part 7 of 12

There are a lot of myths about recycling passed along from person to person. We are here to explain some of those myths, so you can be the best recycler possible.

Myth: Recycling should pay for itself. Cities get rich off the sale of materials.

FALSE. It is a common misperception that the revenue generated from the sale of recovered materials should be enough to off-set the collection and processing costs and even make a profit for a city. This is not true. **Recycling is one option for managing waste, and waste costs money.** When a material enters the waste stream, whether trash, recycling, composting or household hazardous waste, there is an associated cost.

In Denver, our goal is to keep the cost of recycling below the cost of trash collection and disposal. We are able to do this because each time we deliver a ton of recyclables for processing the City receives \$33 per ton; however, every time we take a ton of trash to the landfill it costs us about \$13 per ton. This means the City is able to save money every time someone takes recyclable material out of their trash cans and puts it in a recycling cart. Consequently, less of your tax dollars are used for solid waste services.

Despite recent reports about the depressed market for recyclables (much as every other market has been depressed), there remains a demand for this material and market prices are slowly increasing in early 2009. Since recycling is a commodities market (that is the demand for recyclable materials is based on the demand for recycled content products), it is important to remember that recycling does not stop when you place material at the curb. Recycling is a closed loop system and consumers must purchase recycled content products to ensure the cycle continues. To help residents "close the loop," Denver Recycles has developed an online service that allows people to share information about what and where they are buying recycled products. Check out our "**Buy Recycled Shopping List**" at DenverGov.org/DenverRecycles and event post where you have found local recycled content products for sale.

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