

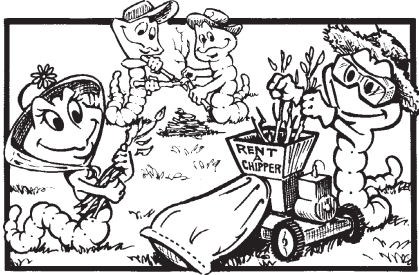
## What About Brush?

### Mulch

If you have access to a wood chipper, you can make excellent mulch out of small woody materials. Your community may also provide seasonal chipping services or a wood chip pile for public use.

Spread 1 to 2 inches of wood chips:

- around trees and shrubs to protect their trunks and roots.
- around plants in the garden to help suppress weeds
- around play equipment and trails to provide a soft "paving."



For more information on composting or DNR yard waste regulations, contact your local municipal recycling staff, a County Extension Agent, or a DNR recycling specialist.

Department of Natural Resources  
 PO Box 7921  
 Madison, WI 53707  
 (608) 266-2111

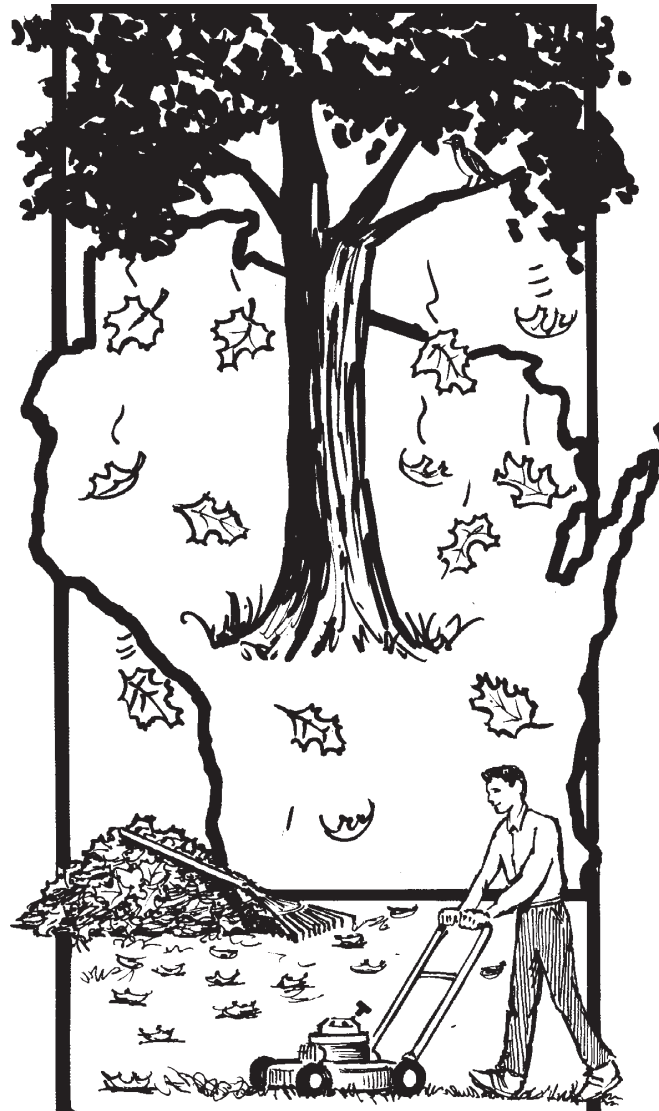
<sup>1</sup>For Fast Compost recipe, see PUB-SW-072 92, *Home Composting: Reap A Heap of Benefits*.  
 Illustrations: Joal Morris

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# Yard Care

## Do Your Share!



Wisconsin Department  
 of Natural Resources  
 PUB-WA-073 2001

## Wisconsin's Recycling Law

Can you believe almost 464,000 tons of yard waste is produced by Wisconsin households each year? But, it's not trash anymore! Some municipalities are collecting yard waste for composting, and many residents are using information from pamphlets like this to manage yard waste on their own properties.

Yard waste in landfills contributes to methane gas and leachate which pollute the air and local water supplies. Moisture in yard waste causes it to burn poorly and causes air pollution.

Since January 1993, state law has banned yard waste — leaves, grass clippings, garden debris, and twigs, brush, and branches smaller than six inches in diameter — from landfills and most incinerators. This law does not apply to stumps, roots or shrubs with intact root balls, or incinerators which burn waste to recover energy.



## A Burning Issue

Another popular method of leaf and brush disposal—backyard burning—pollutes the air, creates a fire hazard, and is a nuisance to neighbors. State air quality and fire control rules restrict backyard burning, and many communities prohibit it entirely. For a cleaner, safer alternative to burning your yard waste, try mulching or composting!

## How To Grow A Healthy Lawn

### Reduce Thatch

Rake up all the thatch from your lawn in spring, before new grass shoots appear. Thatch is made up of roots, dead leaf sheaths, and root stalks - not grass clippings. Unless you remove it, thatch will keep clippings from reaching the soil and decomposing properly.



### Grow Longer Grass

Let your grass grow to 3" to 5" in height. Longer grass will encourage a deeper root system, shade out weeds, and help your lawn retain moisture.

### Cut Less Grass At A Time

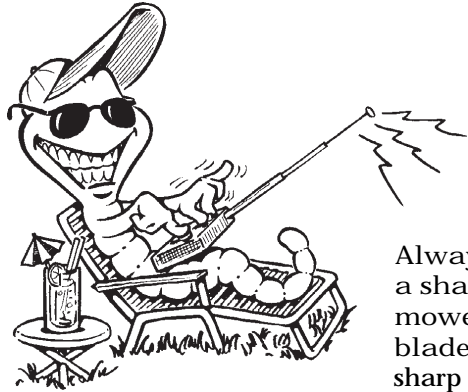
Cut only the top third of your grass (around 1") with each cutting. Your lawn can be damaged if too much of each grass blade is removed at one time. Lawns kept at the proper height also cut more easily and quickly.



### Leave Clippings On Your Lawn

Fertilize your lawn by leaving your grass clippings behind! Grass clippings are rich in nitrogen, an important fertilizing agent. Leaving clippings on your lawn all season is the same as one fertilizer application!

## Easy Lawn Care Tips



Always use a sharp mower blade. A sharp blade

(sharpened twice a year) means finer clippings that decompose quickly.

Water infrequently. Water no more than once a week on heavy soils, twice a week on sandy soils. Apply about one inch of water at a time to encourage deep, healthy roots.

Water early in the morning. Water applied in the afternoon evaporates too quickly, and watering in the evening can encourage disease problems.

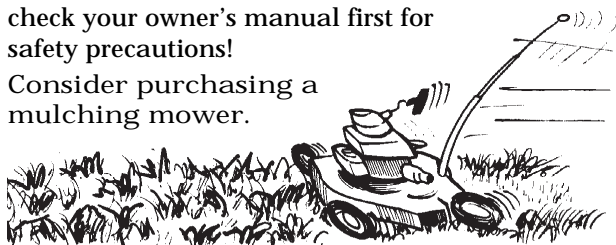
Avoid over-fertilizing. Too much fertilizer may actually harm your lawn, and the excess will wash away and pollute neighboring lakes and streams.

Test your soil every 3-4 years for fertilizer levels and soil compaction. Contact your county extension agent for information on soil testing.

Plant low-maintenance lawn covers. In shady spots or lightly-used areas, try non-mowing plants like periwinkle or ground ivy.

Convert your bagging mower to a non-bagging mower. Many manufacturers sell kits to convert lawn mowers. ALWAYS check your owner's manual first for safety precautions!

Consider purchasing a mulching mower.



## When Should I Collect My Clippings?

You should use a bagging mower or rake to collect your grass clippings in the following situations:



The lawn is wet. Matted clumps of wet grass can smother the lawn and slow its growth.



More than one inch is cut. Oversized clippings will tend to clump up and decompose very slowly.



The lawn is heavily diseased. Clippings may spread the disease to healthy areas of your lawn. Collect diseased clippings and compost them using the *Fast Compost*<sup>1</sup> recipe.



Your mower is unsafe to operate without a bagging attachment. Use the clippings as a garden mulch or in a compost pile.



During cool weather. In early spring and late fall, cool temperatures may slow decomposition. You may want to collect clippings from the first and last two mowings.



### Try A Tarp!

Tired of lugging around expensive, easily torn plastic bags when collecting or moving leaves and grass clippings? Use a large tarp (8' x 10') with 1" holes every 3-4 feet around the edge.

Rake the materials onto the tarp, then put a rope through the holes and pull the tarp together to form a sack. Simply pull the load to move it. The tarp slides easily over grass, so minimal lifting is required.

## How Should I Use My Clippings?

### Compost

Mix grass clippings with leaves and other organic materials in your backyard compost pile.



Compost diseased clippings or grass treated with herbicides or insecticides with the *Fast Compost*<sup>1</sup> recipe. Finished compost can be safely added to your garden soil.

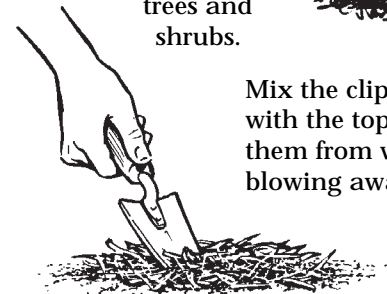
### Mulch

Clippings and other mulch materials act to suppress weeds, keep plant roots cool and moist, and prevent soil from eroding or compacting.

Add grass clippings to gardens and around the base of trees and shrubs.



Mix the clippings slightly with the topsoil to prevent them from washing or blowing away.



## What Should I Do With My Leaves?

Chop your leaves before composting or mulching with a hoe, shovel, or power mower to help them decompose more quickly.

### Compost

Leaves make an excellent addition to any compost pile.



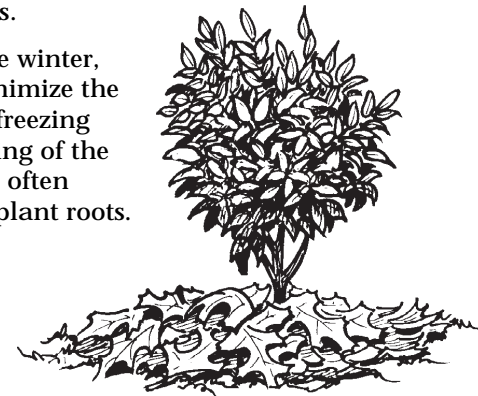
Black walnut trees contain a growth inhibitor in their leaves and root systems. Compost black walnut leaves using the *Fast Compost*<sup>1</sup> recipe to neutralize the growth inhibitor before adding to your garden soil.

### Mulch

Leaves are rich in carbon, phosphorus, and potassium — all essential nutrients needed by plants.

Spread autumn leaves over your garden and around the bases of bushes, trees, and perennials.

During the winter, leaves minimize the alternate freezing and thawing of the soil which often damages plant roots.



Pine needles and oak leaves make a good mulch for acid-loving perennials like rhododendrons, lilies of the valley, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, spruces, yews, butterfly weed and cardinal flowers.