

RECYCLE AMERICA CUT IT HIGH AND LET IT LIE

Increasingly, people throughout the Houston area are becoming aware of the need to minimize the destruction of natural resources and the need for additional landfills. In pursuit of those goals, we seek to recycle paper, glass, aluminum, oil, etc. Unfortunately, the easiest product to recycle is ignored by many: **YARD WASTE!**

The Texas Agricultural Extension Service, the Texas Water Commission and the City of Houston have all endorsed a program called "Don't Bag It". The purpose is to educate the public about the necessity of recycling this totally organic natural resource. It is easy and can save you time and money.

Approximately 18% of the annual national municipal solid waste generated in the U.S. each year is made up of yard waste. During the growing season, landfill disposal consists of 40-50% yard waste in the southern United States. It has been estimated that, in some affluent neighborhoods in the Houston area, up to 70% of trash generated during summer months is a grass clipping.

The simplest approach to eliminating this problem is to leave the grass clippings in your yard. Almost all manufacturers now produce mowers designed for mulching. Should you not be inclined to purchase a new mower, you can simply remove the grass catcher and, if necessary, mow twice to cut the grass blades into small enough pieces to facilitate dropping into the grass rather than resting atop. One key ingredient is regular mowing, cutting off no more than one-third of the blade at a time.

The Texas Agricultural Extension Service reports that this approach should reduce the required number of annual fertilizations by one, significantly reduce the watering requirements and reduce the amount of time spent on grass care by up to 30%. They further state that the fear of creating a thatch problem is a fallacy.

Should you prefer continuing to catch the grass clippings, you may consider starting a composting pile in a corner of your back yard. Leaves, grass, small tree cuttings and most kitchen garbage can be added to this pile to make a rich mulch and organic fertilizer for any garden or bedding areas. Please remember that most of the soil in the Houston area is slightly alkaline, and most plants suited for this climate like a slightly acidic soil. Should you have pine trees in your yard, pine needles are a perfect mulching material that have the added benefit of adding acid to your soil.