



**TETRA TECH, INC.**

## **Smart Care for Your Lawn and Garden**

Lawns and gardens often require watering during the summer and early fall. Overwatering is not only bad for your lawn, it's a strain on water supplies and often ends up as wasted, excess runoff to lakes and streams.

### **Watering Your Lawn**

According to Michigan State University Extension Office research, lawns generally require 1/2 to 1-1/2 inches of water per week, applied in small amounts throughout the week. Light, frequent watering supports healthy grass and resists disease and pests. The best schedule for watering is 15 - 20 minutes per day between noon and 4:00 p.m. when the grass is under the most stress. If daily watering is not practical for you, local horticulture specialists suggest an every-other-day schedule of 30 - 40 minutes. For best results, combine light, frequent watering with grass mulching and slow-release fertilizer applications.

### **Reduce Your Watering: Feed Your Lawn with Grass Clippings!**

Clippings are 85 percent water. Short clippings quickly decompose, adding valuable nutrients to the soil. By mulching grass, fertilizers can be reduced by 30 percent or more! A common myth is that grass clippings cause thatch, a layer of living and dead roots and stems growing between the green layer and the soil. Troublesome thatch is actually caused by improper use of lawn chemicals, compacted soils, and excessive watering.

#### **TIP: Mow High!**

Set mower blade at the highest setting, leaving grass blades 3" tall. Tall grass encourages deep roots, which require less water, and also shades out crabgrass and low-growing weeds. It also makes your lawn less vulnerable to drought.

#### **TIP: Mow Frequently!**

Remove no more than the top 1/3 of the grass blade.

#### **TIP: Let your clippings lay**

Let the short grass blades fall back onto the lawn. A mulching mower will cut grass blades into small pieces that can decompose quicker.

#### **TIP: Properly maintain your lawn mowing equipment**

Use a sharp mower blade. A dull mower blade will tear grass and provide an entry way for diseases. Keep the mower deck clean.

#### **TIP: Watch the weather**

Mow when the grass is dry.

### **Fertilizing Your Lawn**

In the case of fertilizer, more is NOT better! Over-applied fertilizer will wash off your lawn when it rains and pollute lakes and streams. Excess fertilizer may also move past the root zone and contaminate your drinking water supplies.

#### **TIP: Know what your lawn needs!**

A soil test will tell you what nutrients are already contained in your lawn so that you are not over-applying fertilizers. Soil-test assistance with interpreting test results are available from your local Michigan State University Extension Office.

**For more guidelines on composting yard waste in your community, check out:**

[http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3312\\_4118\\_4239-14774--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3312_4118_4239-14774--,00.html)

**Or contact your local yard waste pickup or solid waste department for composting in your area.**

**TIP: Pick the right fertilizers**

Select a slow-release fertilizer to promote steady, uniform growth and to protect water quality. Slow-release options include organic fertilizers, products with water-insoluble nitrogen (marked "W.I.N." on the label), and products with synthetic coatings.

**TIP: Fertilize only when necessary**

Fertilize in September or October to promote root growth rather than top growth. Deep roots withstand drought and resist disease. Strong roots store food produced in the grass blades for use in early spring.

**TIP: Stay away from combined fertilizers**

Separate fertilizers from pesticides. Combination "weed and feed" products often contain unnecessary herbicides.

**TIP: Know your compost**

Use screened compost as a top dressing on the lawn. Compost contributes organic matter and gradually releases nutrients to the soil.

## **What should you do with extra grass clippings?**

There are a variety of ways you can manage excess grass clippings. Below are several suggestions.

**TIP: Compost it!**

Mix grass clippings with leaves and soil to make a compost pile.

**TIP: Mulch it!**

Use clippings as garden mulch.

**TIP: Buy a new mulching blade**

Retrofit your present mower with a mulching blade. For optimal safety and performance, select a mulching blade or kit (blade and chute cover) that is specifically designed to fit the model of your mower. For a rear discharge mower, the discharge chute should be covered for safety.

Some older mowers can be used to mulch by raising the mower blade and cutting more frequently. Before attempting to use your mower to recycle grass, consult your owner's manual or local equipment dealer. You may want to consider purchasing a new mower. Mulching mowers powered by battery, electricity, and gasoline are popular choices. Manual push mowers do not emit exhaust fumes and are also available with easy-roll wheels.

**TIP: Recycle it!**

Remember, state law prohibits yard waste in landfills. Contact your city's sanitation or environmental department to see if they have a curbside collection program specifically for grass clippings and other yard waste.

*For more information about MDOT's Storm Water Management Plan, check out <http://www.michigan.gov/stormwatermgt>.*