



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Hardin County Extension News Release

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Turf Tips: Mowing

By Barb Snyder, OSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Hardin County – Hopefully, you've taken the time to get your lawnmower ready for the season before mowing for the first time. If not, there are some things that you need to do to get it performing in top shape. Use an air compressor or leaf blower to clear the mower deck of any grass clippings, dirt, or debris. Replace spark plugs based on the manufacturer's recommendations. Old spark plugs can be difficult to remove, so you may need use a penetrating oil spray to loosen them. Too much force could do damage to the engine. Tighten the new spark plug with your fingers first, then use a special spark plug socket to secure properly.

Change the oil after consulting the operator's manual for the correct oil. Change both the oil and air filter as necessary. Sharpen the blades. Dull blades leave a torn edge on the grass and it takes longer to heal. Dull blades also cause the mower engine and belts to work harder. Grease fittings each time you change the oil. Check the tires for proper air pressure. Empty the gas tank at the end of the season. Add gas stabilizer to fuel and run it through the system when the mower has not been operated for three months or more.

Each time you mow the grass, change the direction and pattern to reduce turf wear from the mower wheels. If you keep mowing in the same direction, the mower tends to push the grass over. If this happens, you will not get a clean cut. Mow when the lawn is dry. Ideally, 3 inches of grass should be left after mowing. This grass height shades, prevents weed germination, water evaporation, and the ground is insulated during periods of drought. If for some reason you miss mowing your lawn and the grass gets tall, cut only 1/3 of the blade height off at a time. Take several days to mow the grass down to the 3 inch level.

When more than 1/3 of the grass blade is removed at a time, the grass plant is shocked and stressed, causing the growth processes to be slowed. If lawns are mowed high, the grass blades get more sunlight, which means more energy for the plant and a stronger lawn with deeper roots. Don't rake the grass clippings, as they will turn to mulch. At one time it was recommended to cut the grass shorter than normal in the spring. This was thought to allow the sun to reach the grass crowns. Now, experts have determined that early scalping does more damage than good. This practice forces the plant to put its energy into blade production instead of root development.