



# Lawn care guide - Mowing



**Use your catcher in the wet and make the most of your clippings in the dry**

1

You can get your hands on a special type of mower that mulches as well as mows.

Using a mulch mower during the dry season is a great way to save time and keep much needed nutrients on your lawn.

2

If you don't have a mulch mower, leaving the catcher off is the second best choice.

3

Use your catcher during the wet season. Too many grass clippings can cause water-logging and stop your lawn from getting enough air.

Having the catcher on when it's wet (and the lawn is growing) will stop the grass from clumping and let the rainwater recharge your soil.

4

Try mixing it up with the directions you mow. It reduces wear and tear on your lawn, helps aeration, reduces compaction, and helps your grass grow upright.

5

Beware when giving your lawn the chop! Mowing at just the right height will help your grass grow strong roots and build a healthy lawn, but cutting too low can kill it and cause weeds to pop up in its place.

Keep in mind that different species of lawn need to be mowed at different heights!

6

Steer clear of the mower after watering your lawn. Mowing when it's wet can damage your grass because it's not a clean cut, and causes the clippings to clump. It can also increase soil compaction which reduces aeration.

After watering, 80% of your lawn clippings are water anyway – you're making it harder for yourself! It's best to mow late afternoon when the lawn is a little dryer.

7

The more you mow your lawn, the more fertiliser you need to replace the nutrients it loses when it's cut.

8

Letting your grass grow a little longer during dry periods encourages the roots to grow deeper and makes your lawn stronger because it can handle heat and water stress better.

9

Buffalo grass and other broad leaf species can produce more than 40kg of clippings every fortnight during the wet season on a typical Townsville yard. (See graph for a comparison with other species)

10

Getting rid of large amounts of green waste like grass clippings costs the community money and is sometimes dumped illegally near our waterways.

Excess clippings can affect the water quality of local creeks, wetlands and fishing spots.

### Did you know?

An average buffalo lawn of 400 m<sup>2</sup> in Townsville produces more than half a tonne of green waste per year? Most of that is just between January and April!

## Getting to know your lawn's sleeping habits

Townsville grasses are warm season grasses. They naturally go dormant in the cool winter months.

During this time the grass focuses its energy on growing its roots. When this is happening, it doesn't grow much above the surface and leaf blades can turn pale or brown colour – that's ok! The lawn is healthy. It's just experiencing some seasonal changes. Winter is nap time for your lawn. Grass starts to go dormant around April or May, when it gets cooler (usually when night time temps are down to 15°C). Around then you'll notice that your lawn grows much slower than at other times of the year.

This is a great time to back off your watering. Not even a bucket of cold water will wake up a sleeping lawn.

If you let your lawn go for a month or two during dormancy, it will allow it to grow deep roots and help

it to suck in more water when things heat up again. In spring the lawn will green up and continue growing.

Dormant lawns can survive three to four weeks without water. A good watering schedule for maintaining your lawn during the cool, dry months is to water once every two weeks. You can get away with watering less often because the lawn won't grow much when it's dormant. When spring comes around and the temperature increases, you can get back to watering. But remember, no more than twice a week in the dry and never when it's wet!

Avoid temptation to fertilise when your lawn goes dormant. It may look like it's under stress, but it's okay. Fertilising during dormancy isn't going to do your lawn any good. Wait until September or October.

## Managing a dormant lawn

Before June, mow your lawn a little higher and during winter only mow if absolutely necessary to reduce your lawn's stress levels.

Take a load off! Give yourself a break from mowing and let your grass grow deep roots that allow it to grow strong when things heat up again.

If possible, reduce the amount of traffic on your lawn because it can't repair itself very well when it's dormant.

Get rid of weeds that have top root – roots that dive deep into the soil. They may keep growing and steal any valuable water that's already in the soil.

## Mower height guide

LAWN SPECIES	RECOMMENDED MOWER HEIGHT (MM)
Japanese lawn grass ( <i>Zoysia japonica</i> )	15 – 30
Manila grass ( <i>Zoysia matrella</i> )	10 - 20
Green couch ( <i>Cynodon dactylon</i> )	15 – 30
Buffalo grass ( <i>Stenotaphrum secundatum</i> )	30 - 50
Kikuyu ( <i>Pennisetum clandestinum</i> )	30 - 50
Seashore paspalum ( <i>Paspalum vaginatum</i> )	15 – 30
Sweet smother ( <i>Dactyloctenium australe</i> )	30 - 50
Queensland blue couch ( <i>Digitaria didactyla</i> )	15 – 30
Broadleaf carpet grass ( <i>Axonopus compressus</i> )	30 - 50

## Measuring your mower blade height

To check your blade height, put your mower on a hard surface and measure from the ground.

