



MIDDLESEX COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24, 2012

MCIA Gives County Residents an Eco-Friendly Education on Grasscycling

MIDDLESEX COUNTY – Tis' the season for planting, cutting, clippings and all things yard-work related.

As the height of mowing season approaches in May and June, the Middlesex County Improvement Authority's Recycling Division has launched its annual campaign to inform residents about the benefits of "grasscycling."

Grasscycling is the practice of leaving short grass clippings on the lawn rather than bagging and dragging them to the curb.

"It's a natural fertilizer for your lawn," pointed out MCIA Recycling Division Manager Edward Windas. "It's putting nitrogen right back into the ground."

Recent studies have shown that the grass clippings act as a natural fertilizer, shelter tender grass roots from the sun, conserve moisture and create lawns that are more resistant to weeds and certain lawn diseases.

Not only is grasscycling healthier for lawns, but it saves municipalities the cost of having to remove the material, as well as the carbon footprint of yet another plastic bag.

Additionally, it takes no extra time or effort; especially in comparison to the bag-and-drag routine, which experts say makes up 35 percent of the average time an individual spends on lawn-care.

"Grasscycling essentially takes no effort," Windas said. "You just cut it and leave it."

While some residents are bypassing the opportunity to put this yard-waste treasure to good use, the entities on the receiving end are reaping all the benefits.

In Middlesex County's case, the vast majority of collected clippings will end up in one of two places and at a cost-per-ton to both individuals and municipalities, Windas explains.

The first is with the County's yard waste contractor, which then composts the material and later uses it as an additive for soils deficient in organics. The second location is within the state's landfills, where grass is still an acceptable yard waste product, according to New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection regulations. These grass clippings accelerate the rate of decomposition of surrounding waste within the landfill.

On average, the MCIA's Recycling Division sees approximately 6,000 tons of grass clippings in a given mowing season, a time-frame spanning between April and October.

"The clippings are less notable if you purchase a mulching mower, which produces finer particles that disperse much more evenly," Windas said. "But it's really up to each individual to make that choice, because we do still offer collection services here."

For more information on grasscycling or the MCIA's Recycling Division contact 1-800-488-6242 for a brochure or the Rutgers Cooperative Extension at 732-398-5260 or by logging onto www.rce.rutgers.edu.

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