

# Organic Turf Care Cultural Practices

## Mowing

In an All Natural Organic Turf Care (OTC) program proper mowing heights can and do have a significant impact on the likely success of the program. Higher mowing heights contribute to shading the soil which directly affects soil temperature and blocking sunlight to the soil surface. Both of these, cooler soil temperature and lack of sunlight discourage weed seed germination. With more surface area the turf grass is able to carry on greater levels of photosynthesis. Through increased levels of photosynthesis a deeper, more vigorous root system is developed. Greater root mass enables the turf grass to be more wear resistance, drought tolerant, and endure greater stress. Another benefit of a healthy root system is the addition of as much as ½ to 4 tons of organic matter per acre to the soil on an annual basis. Mowing heights should change over the course of the growing season starting at 2 ½ " in early spring – moving to 3" to 4" by June and ending the season in November at 2 ½ ".

*When mowing, cut no more than 1/3 of the grass blade at a time. Grass should ideally be maintained between 3 ½ - 4". The following guide will help determine when your grass should be cut & how often.*

Desired Height:	Cut When	Frequency:
2 ½" (early spring and end of season)	3 ¾"	4 Days
3"	4 ½"	5 Days
3 ½"	5 ¼"	6 Days
4"	6"	7 Days

## Grass Clippings

In an All Natural Turf Care program grass clippings should be returned. With a healthy ecosystem the return of clippings adds to the soil organic matter and serves as a natural fertilizer equal to one application per season. The healthy soil biology will breakdown the grass clippings.

## Watering

Watering should be deep, infrequent and in the morning. Established grass should receive ¾" – 1" of water a week through natural rain fall or irrigation. If irrigating this may mean that each zone is in operation for 50 minutes to an hour depending on flow rate. To test how much water is being delivered, use a small can and measure the water collected. During extreme heat the grass should be watered more frequently for shorter periods. Over watering can lead to soil compaction and disease.

**Watering – Over-seeded** areas: Water 2X a day for approximately 10 - 15 minutes, *mid morning & afternoon*, to ensure soil and seed stay moist – not wet. Maintain watering schedule until seed germinates, approximately two - three weeks. Once the seed germinates, cut back watering to once per day in the morning, then every other day, then twice per week as the root system gets establishes. Once germination is complete you need to water 1 inch weekly to maintain a healthy lawn. *Grass can take up to 18 months to become fully established.*

## Turf Density

A dense lawn is the best way to crowd out weeds. Grass like any crop must be regularly planted to ensure the highest yield (thickest lawn). Since grass is cut before it goes to seed it is necessary to periodically over-seed. In the spring we recommend seed slicing to avoid bringing weed seeds to the surface. Late summer/early fall is the best time to repair thin lawns by broadcast over seeding when aerating.



**Organic Products + Cultural Practices = Healthy Lawn**

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