

How high should I mow my lawn?**May 11, 2020**

A very common question is, “How high should I mow my lawn?” The truth is that most lawn grasses will be happy when mowed between one and a half to four inches. The more important question is, “How much do you like to mow your lawn?”

Our lawn mowing research over the past five years has resulted in these recommendations:

- Mowing to the 1/3rd Rule minimizes mowing requirements and sustains lawn aesthetics. This means turfgrass managers should mow when 1/3rd of leaf length is removed by the mower. As mowing height declines, mowing frequency increases to satisfy this mowing recommendation.
- For cool-season lawns like tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, and perennial ryegrass, a good goal is 1.5 inches of vertical growth a week. If it is growing less than that, nitrogen fertilizer is generally recommended. If a lawn is faster than that, then reduce nitrogen fertilization.

By combining these two pieces of information, we can develop approximate mowing requirements for cool-season grasses at different mowing heights (Table 1).

Table 1. The approximate number of days between mowing events at different mowing heights.

Mower cutting height	Turf height to initiate mowing	Days between mowing events*
1 Inch	1.5 Inches	2
2 Inches	3.0 Inches	4
3 Inches	4.5 Inches	7
4 Inches	6.0 Inches	9

* Assuming 1.5 inches of vertical growth per week for cool-season grass species

Bottom line, mowing shorter increases the number of required mowing events. Since most people mow only one time a week (usually on the weekend), we recommend mowing at three inches because it does not violate the 1/3rd rule. When you’re mowing weekly at three inches but there aren’t many clippings, then nitrogen fertilizer may be required. And as always, mulch mow those clippings.

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