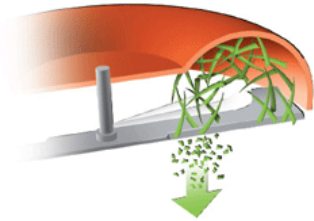


Mulching Mowers



The use of mulching mowers was first suggested in 2011 on our Flagship Housing contract as part of an initiative to improve cutting times, reduce fertilizer use and reduce the carbon emissions caused by the transportation of grass cuttings to green recycling centres. These Mowers were first used in the season of 2012 with good results and are now being used on other contracts within the business giving substantial environmental and time savings without reducing the quality of lawn condition.

How mulching mowers work?

The secret of the success of a good mulching mower is in the cutting deck design. The deck is aerodynamically designed on the underside to make the air and the grass clippings suspended in the air, travel in two directions. At the same time as air and grass clippings move in a rotary direction around the inside of the deck they also travel in a vortex which allows the grass to pass through the cutting cycle many, many, times. Finally both air and finely chopped grass particles are blown out of the cutting deck with a positive downward pressure to conceal the particles of grass in the base of the turf.

In addition to specifically designed cutting decks, mulching mowers also feature a specially designed blade to provide the air flow required. Beware of mowers that claim to collect and mulch as there will always be a compromise on performance, a collecting mower typically cuts the blade of grass only once before blowing cuttings into a collector.

Why mulch your grass clippings?

Grass clippings make a great slow release fertiliser if mulched correctly and left in the lawn. Throwing away grass cuttings only adds to the already overloaded landfill sites and of course wastes valuable nutrients, increases carbon emissions through transport and costs time. To quantify the amount of grass being wasted - a lawn the size of a tennis court will produce in the region of 1¼ tons of grass clippings per year, which is the equivalent of 9 tons per acre. To put this in perspective this would produce 33lbs of nitrogen, 30lbs of potash and 10.3lbs of phosphate in one year, that all adds up to some very impressive figures. If we stretch those numbers to an acre of lawn it looks like 242lbs of nitrogen, 224lbs of potash and 76lbs of phosphate.

Mulching feeds soil micro-organisms

A healthy, productive lawn is alive with micro-organisms, earth worms and insects. Feeding these creatures regularly with organic matter can actually improve the quality of the soil and your lawn. The additional level of micro-organisms at work on mulched clippings has been shown to suppress certain grass diseases and reduce mould spore counts. Finely chopped grass clippings from a mulching lawnmower provide a feast for these tiny organisms. These organisms help break down the clippings releasing valuable nutrients and returning them to the soil as well as helping aerate the soil.

Mulching is Quieter

A mulching mower is not only friendly to the environment through recycling but also in noise pollution as mulching mowers are significantly quieter than their collecting counterparts. The quietest powered mower in the world is an electric mulching mower whilst the quietest petrol mower in the world is also a mulching mower; with a noise level of 88.9DB it has half the apparent noise level of an equivalent collecting mower.

Mulching reduces “thatch”

Thatch is a spongy layer of stems, root stolons and partially decomposed organic matter that has accumulated on the surface of the soil. If left untreated thatch forms a layer preventing healthy grass growth with the lawn dependent on artificial additives to survive.

Mulching actually reduces thatch and does not cause thatch build-up. The micro-organisms that thrive on decomposing mulched clippings also do a good job breaking down thatch. simply cutting and leaving long grass on a lawn may provide the conditions for thatch build-up however correct mulching reduces thatch by creating a much more healthy soil and root zone.

By improving the texture and content of the soil and reducing diseases and thatch, the end result of lawn mulching is a fuller, healthier looking lawn