GRASS CLIPPING MANAGEMENT

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Each year Californians generate approximately 44 million tons of municipal solid waste. As our population grows and trash dumps become scarce, the solid waste problem becomes more critical. Although voluntary waste recycling has been in place in many California communities for years, waste reduction became mandatory for California municipalities with the passage of AB 939, California's Integrated Waste Management Act. This statute mandates that each jurisdiction in the state reduce its trash output by 25% by 1995 and 50% by the year 2000, with 1990 as the base year. Concurrent to the passage of AB 939, the newly created California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB), began implementing a comprehensive set of laws addressing California's solid waste disposal dilemma while lessening the demand on diminishing natural resources.

It is estimated that 20% of waste going to landfills is yard waste. Composting is one successful method of dealing with such waste; the Board is also exploring ways to reduce yard waste generation. Since grass clippings comprise a significant portion of this waste, the Board supports the practice of "grasscycling". Consequently, with the assistance of U.C.C.E., information has been developed to promote grasscycling among both homeowners and professional landscape managers.

Grasscycling is a new term for the old practice of leaving clippings on the lawn after mowing. This practice is environmentally sound, and saves time, energy, and our rapidly declining landfill space. A grasscycling research project at the Bay Area Research and Extension Center in Santa Clara generated interesting data: Preliminary results show that using a mulching (recycling) mower on a bluegrass/ryegrass lawn can reduce grass clipping waste by up to 300 lb/1000 ft$^2$/year. Regular analysis of grass clippings suggest that leaving this quantity of clippings on lawn can add up to 4 lbs. of nitrogen/1000 ft$^2$/year. No thatch has accumulated where clippings are returned to the lawn. This project will continue for one more year and is expected to generate additional useful data.