

# A Method of Recycling: From Clippings to Compost

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AS THE WORLD'S POPULATION continues to grow, it is clear that managing our natural resources is vitally important to future generations. All of us, for example, are becoming more aware of the value and importance of recycling. And while items like aluminum cans, glass bottles, and newspaper often draw our attention, there are other resources that can be recycled. This turf tip deals with "A Method of Recycling" developed at Belmont Country Club in Toledo, Ohio. It is focused on the recycling of grass clippings, taking them from an expensive waste material to a beneficial compost.

The removal and disposal of grass clippings can be time consuming, expensive, and can result in the loss of a valuable natural resource. This is particularly true when clippings are collected and removed in a fairway maintenance program.

Some maintenance operations scatter clippings in the adjacent rough, but this can

cause problems with aesthetics, odor, and/or playability, especially when continued over time. Other courses pile clippings for removal or throw them directly into trailers. If clippings are hauled away, where do you take them — to a remote spot on the property or a community dump? Some golf course operations are throwing clippings into dumpsters for removal. However, this is expensive and, in some cases, no longer an option.

When clippings are scattered or hauled away, potential compost value is lost. How can a golf course superintendent catch and remove clippings economically, while still recycling the valuable portion?

Jim Burnard, superintendent at Belmont Country Club, has dedicated two areas of the golf course property to clipping composting and storage. He has found that between one-quarter and one-half acre is needed at each site. One larger site would also be a possibility. As the clippings are removed from the

course, they are deposited into trailers and then transported to the composting site. A temporary pile is made, which later is loaded into a spreader.

A modified manure spreader is used to spread the clippings. The beaters on the spreader have been removed and the height of the chain bar increased. This ensures good movement of the clippings from the hopper during the spreading process. It is important to scatter the clippings in a thin layer to achieve quick drying and to prevent odor. To speed clipping drying and minimize odor, lime is added to the hopper before the spreading process begins. Approximately 25 pounds of lime per spreader load has proven sufficient.

The clippings are spread in a large circular path around the dedicated site. Several clipping circles are created. These paths are located far enough apart to prevent the tractor and spreader tires from tracking through the clippings as they are drying. A path is not reused until the base layer is completely dry. This process is continued throughout the season. Odor has not been a problem as long as the clippings are allowed to dry before more are added on top. At the end of the season, all of the dried clippings are pushed into one large pile using a front-end loader. The large piles of clippings can then be mixed with leaves and other organic debris. It is also possible to add soil or sand to the compost pile. The end result is compost that can be used for any number of purposes from flower and ornamental beds to divot filling and even topdressing areas on the course.

The key to this turf tip is to dedicate one or more areas where the dropping, spreading, and composting of clippings can occur. In addition, a manure spreader must be obtained and modified to handle the clippings. The cost is minimal, and although there is an ongoing time investment, the end result can be beneficial to the entire operation. Why pay to haul clippings away (if still allowed in your area) when, with a little work, they can be recycled into useable compost? This method of recycling is working for Belmont Country Club, and it can also work for you. Give it a try.

*A modified manure spreader is used at Belmont Country Club in Toledo, Ohio, to recycle their grass clippings. This method of recycling was put together by Jim Burnard, superintendent (right); Dino Brownson, past green chairman (center); and Dr. George Black, past green committee member (left).*

