

Dear Mayor Mark and Trustees,

The following is the statement of the Friends of the Scarsdale Parks, Inc. to the Village Board in July 2014 in support of grasscycling (which also advocated in favor of leaf conservation):

“The Friends of the Scarsdale Parks supports an amendment to the fall leaf collection regulations of the Village of Scarsdale, to take effect immediately. The new regulations should require bagging of fall leaves on all residential properties, with the option for residents to use leaves on their property as mulch; to have leaves and grass clippings mower-shredded in place; to use leaves and grass clippings as a component for making compost; or to have leaves and grass clippings carted away by landscapers. At the same time the Village should establish an ongoing educational program to actively promote the methods and environmental benefits of leaf and grass recycling, and should establish an accelerated timetable for the discontinuation of Village collection of leaves and grass clippings.”

FOSP was an early advocate for a more sustainable environmental approach than the existing collection program of yard organics, and for the use rather than disposal of leaves and grass clippings by residents and the Village contractor and Staff. We vigorously supported the practice of mower shredding/mulching on site in the parks and other Village properties, which was implemented at the two Village center parks in 2012, Chase Park and de Lima Park. Thanks to the farsighted leadership of the Trustees and the Staff, since the beginning of 2013 this method has quickly become the norm throughout the more than two dozen Village properties, including recreation fields, parks and other open spaces.” (FOSP email to Village Board July 2014, copy attached, emphasis added.)

The literature states that some of “the most prevalent reasons that people give for removing clippings may reflect misconceptions and habit. Such reasons include;

- Bagging may be the accepted practice in the neighborhood.
- Clippings can become unsightly when they lay on top of the turf canopy.
- Turf can be smothered due to the inconsistent clipping dispersal of side discharge rotary mowers.
- Some believe clippings enhance turf disease.
- Concern over clippings being tracked into a home or swimming pool.
- The notion that clippings will accumulate and form a detrimental thatch layer.”

Chalmers, et al., "Mowing To Recycle Grass Clippings: Let the Clips Fall Where They May!" pages 1-2 (Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech 2009), at <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-402/430-402.html><http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-402/430-402.html>.

These rationalizations are unpersuasive when weighed against the environmental benefits of grasscycling, the cost of Village collection practices, and the waste of natural resources. Despite the above misconceptions and aesthetic misgivings about grasscycling, “Grass clippings should be treated as a valuable resource. . . .grass clippings on the lawn break down rapidly as they are 85 percent water and do not contribute to thatch. Grass clippings also do not increase the possibility of disease.” Cornell Cooperative Extension, “Grasscycling: Better than Bagging” (Rockland County NY, 2011), at <http://rocklandcce.org/resources/grasscycling>.

As stated previously, we hope that the Village Board will adopt a policy that supports grasscycling as an environmentally superior alternative to the annual collection and removal of tons of organic yard material.

Respectfully submitted,

Madelaine Eppenstein, Secretary  
On behalf of the Friends of the Scarsdale Parks, Inc.