

**All Gardens  
Great & Small**  
by  
York Co.  
Horticultural Agent  
**Tom Becker**



**MOWING BASICS**  
For millions of Americans, the primary rite of spring is mowing their lawn and then becomes four months of weekend labor. Mowing may be a thankless chore, but it reaps benefits if done correctly, says Peter Landschoot, associate professor of turfgrass science in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "Those who want a nice lawn often are overly concerned with fertilizing and watering," he says. "But proper mowing also is an important step toward obtaining strong, vigorous grass that resists disease and weeds." Here's a few basics:  
• Check your mower blades. You want to cut precise, clean cut. If you haven't had your blade sharpened in a year or two, it

probably needs it.  
• Many lawn and garden centers sharpen blades or buy an extra blade and put it on while the original is being sharpened — that way you can change the blade halfway through the season.  
• Make sure your mower is adjusted to the proper height. Two to three inches is ideal. You're not saving yourself time by cutting your grass shorter. Actually a lawn mowed shorter than two inches is more susceptible to heat, disease and drought stress.  
• Use this rule of thumb to plan your mowing height, you shouldn't take off more than one-third of the leaf blade at one time. Otherwise, you may scalp the grass and make it more vulnerable to stress.  
• A lawn's growth rate deter-

mines how often you mow. During spring it may require mowing more than one time a week. By June, growth slows down so you won't need to mow as often. During dry, hot conditions, there's usually no need to mow because the grass is growing extremely slowly.  
• Sometimes prolonged periods of rain make it impossible to mow. In that case, when the sun comes out, cut the grass with the mower blade at its highest setting. You can mow again a few days later with the blade lowered to the desired height.  
Should grass clippings be left on the lawn or composted? An estimated 20 percent of what goes into landfills is yard debris such as tree leaves, hedge prunings, and grass clippings. Recycling grass clippings is not only civic-minded, but it's also beneficial to the lawn and saves the work involved in raking or bagging. Contact your Extension office for information on "recycling" grass clippings and backyard composting.  
If you leave the clippings on the lawn, you can cut down on fertilizer needs by as much as one-third. Clippings break down easi-

**Food Allergy Workshop**

**LEESPORT (Berks Co.)** — Allergies and food intolerance can cause adverse reactions to food and even be life-threatening. A seminar, "Do You Really Have A Food Allergy" will be held at the Penn State Cooperative Extension of Berks County on May 20, 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. Registered dietitian Brenda Daelhousen will explain how to diagnose allergies and intolerance, how to cope and get adequate nutrition, and other helpful information. Advance registration is required. Send a check for \$1.50 made payable to Berks County Cooperative Extension Special Account and mail to Food Allergy Seminar, Berks Co. Ag Center, P.O. Box 520, Leesport, PA 19533.

**Medicinal Usage**

**WESTMINSTER, Md.** — "Kitchen Pharmacy with Common Wild Herbs" is the program slated at the Carroll County Cooperative Extension in Westminster on June 6, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Pharmacist and herbalist Lynn shumake will lead a weed (herb) walk and instruct participants on how to prepare infusions, tinctures, and medicinal use of safe herbs. Cost is \$25. Class size is limited. Registration is required. Call Lisa Spence on Monday or Thursday at the extension office (410) 848-4611.

**Indigo Dyeing**

**DILLSBURG (York Co.)** — A workshop on indigo dyeing of natural fibers will be held at Clear Spring Mills, Dillsburg, on Sat. May 23, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The demonstration will done like the method typical of the 18th century with the open-kettle tradition.

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