



## Best Management Practices for New York State Golf Courses

### Clipping Management

Clipping management is the decision to let the clippings fall back to the turf canopy after mowing or remove them in a bucket or bag. From a water quality perspective, grass clippings are a nutrient rich resource and should be viewed as fertilizer and handled and applied with similar precaution. Removal of clippings should only be performed if the function of the site dictates removal (such as ball roll on a putting surface).

Accumulated clippings distributed over a relatively small area can significantly increase nitrate leaching. Some courses will remove clippings from fairways. Distributing these clippings to driving ranges, clubhouse lawns or simply stockpiled as organic waste. Excessive clippings aggregation has been shown to increase soil nitrate levels from less than 2.5 mg N kg<sup>-1</sup> to a range of 15-30 mg N kg<sup>-1</sup> across the 3-12 inch profile in areas that received four times the amount of normal clippings return. (Bigelow et al. 2005).



Clipping removal is only recommended on surfaces where they disrupt the function of the sites, such as putting surfaces. *Source: Frank Rossi.*

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If clippings are left on the site, they must not be allowed to discharge into adjacent water bodies or storm water treatment structures, or clump on the surface and shade the turf. Several research experiments have investigated the effect of long-term clipping management on turf fertilization. In general, clipping removal mines the soil for nutrients and takes them to another location. Thus, leaving the clippings on the site as the turf ages assists in sustaining the nutrient content of the soil and reduces the reliance on supplemental fertilizer.



**Clippings left on turf after mowing can lead to shading of the turf below and heat stress from microbial activity generated in the piles. *Source: Frank Rossi.***