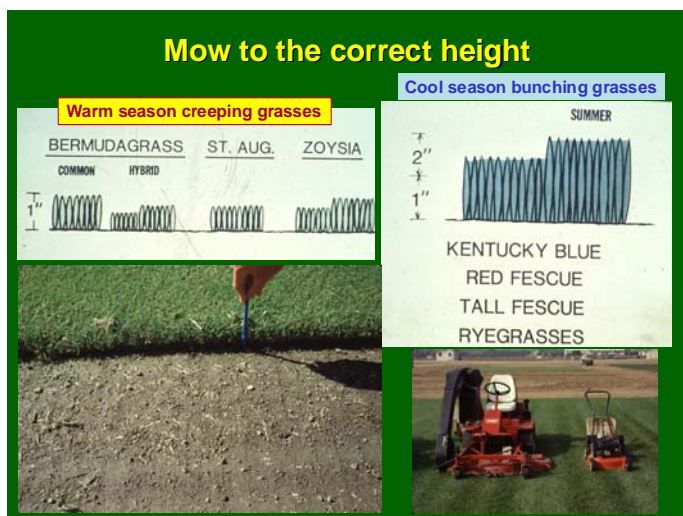




## Suggested Mowing Heights and Mower Types for San Joaquin Valley Lawns

Michelle Le Strange, UC Master Gardener Advisor, Tulare and Kings Counties

Grass type	Mower height setting	Mow when grass reaches this height	Mower type	Comments
Common Bermudagrass	$\frac{3}{4}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ "	$1\frac{1}{4}$ " - $2\frac{1}{4}$ "	Reel or rotary	To reduce mowing frequency, reduce irrigation and fertilization
Hybrid Bermudagrass	$\frac{1}{2}$ - 1"	$\frac{3}{4}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ "	Reel	In summer, mowing may be required every 3 or 4 days.
Tall Fescue	$1\frac{1}{2}$ - 3"	$2\frac{1}{4}$ - $4\frac{1}{2}$ "	Reel or rotary	Mow higher in summer



### Optimum Mowing Conditions for Lawns

Maintaining a lawn at the recommended mowing height helps develop a uniform, dense turf, improves its attractiveness, increases its ability to support traffic, and discourages disease and weed invasion.

- ☑ Mowing too low weakens grass, causing a stand to thin and weeds to invade.
- ☑ Mowing too high produces a ragged lawn; leaf blades "lay down" and thatch builds up.

**How often to mow depends on growth rate of the grass.** Mow lawns often enough so that no more than one-third of the length of a grass blade is removed at any time.

Removing too much of the grass blade depletes food reserves in the plant and makes it more difficult for the plant to recover from the stress and injury of mowing. Additionally it increases the susceptibility to several diseases. Mowing way too low is called "**scalping**." Repeated scalping greatly reduces the vigor of a lawn. **When grass is mowed regularly, clippings can be left on the lawn, a practice called "grasscycling".** Frequent mowing produces short clippings which readily filter into the turf canopy and do not cover the grass surface if left on the lawn. Grasscycling does not increase thatch or disease incidence; it does add nutrients.

**The two basic mower types are reel and rotary.** A reel mower shears grass with a scissor action and is better for fine-textured turfgrasses or where a low mowing height is desirable. A rotary mower depends on impact cutting by a high speed, rotating blade. It is better adapted to higher cutting heights and coarser-textured grasses. Regardless of the mower used, maintain sharp mower blades for a nice clean cut and to avoid fungal infections that result from pathogen entry into created wounds.

**Avoid lawn compaction and ONLY mow when the surface is dry.**

**The University of California has a helpful website that answers just about any question a homeowner would have on lawns.**

**The UC Guide to Healthy Lawns**  
an interactive website accessed through the UC IPM home page  
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/TOOLS/TURF/>