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**Courtesy Copy: Get ready for summer with healthy, green lawns!**

1 message

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# Where the Grass is Greener:



Welcome to the Department of Environmental Protection's monthly newsletter about organic lawns and lawn care. Discover lawn care tips and tools, learn about life in the soil, and connect with us on environmental stewardship of land and water.

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# What's New?



## What causes that fresh cut green grass smell?

Ah...the smell of fresh cut grass on a spring day! (Plus the sneezing?)

Let's just get the answer to the sneezing over with. Sneezing when the grass is cut doesn't necessarily mean you have an allergy to grass, but it could be to what is kicked into the air when cutting. Here in Maryland, grass is estimated to capture over 12 million tons of dust from the air, which can be full of pollen, fungal spores, and other allergens. Some of this dust is flung airborne when mowing, and while we may see it, our noses detect it!

### But where does that "cut grass" smell come from?

Cut grass smells are a signal of distress from the plant, emitted from green leaf volatiles (GLVs). When a green leaf, like grass, is cut or damaged, a variety of GLVs are released to help cells heal faster, act as antibiotics to prevent fungal or bacterial growth, repel pests, or attract predators of plant pests. They can even make a plant less appetizing! Watch a video about GLVs [here](#).

Those GLVs also include eight oxygenated hydrocarbons that are good for human health. In fact, these hydrocarbons can reduce stress and improve memory. Read more about the [positive power of mowing](#).

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# Lawn Care Tips



## Are you sharpening your mower blades enough?

If you had to stop and think about this question, chances are the answer is no. Many of us don't even realize we should be sharpening our mower blades at all.

### Sharp blades are important for healthy grass

Every time we cut grass, it damages the plant. So we want to make sure the healing process doesn't take a lot of energy from the plant. Sharp blades create a clean cut that makes healing easy, while dull blades shred the tips of the grass. Shredded tips require more energy to heal, lose more water from broken cells, and expose more cells to attack by diseases and insects.

### Know when to sharpen

A good rule of thumb is to sharpen your blades after every 10-12 hours of use. But tougher grass or sticks and rocks can dull blades faster. Look at your grass closely after you cut it, and if the blades are getting shredded, it's time to sharpen!

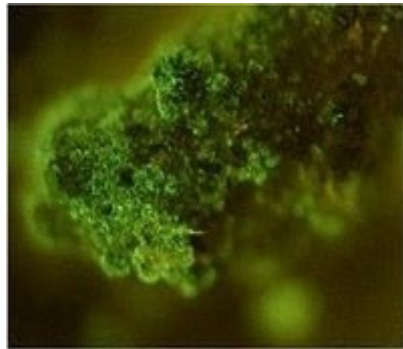
### How to sharpen

The first trick is to keep two blades--when one gets dull, put the sharp one on, and either sharpen the other in between, or sharpen them both together. You can sharpen a blade at home with the right tools, or take them to a local hardware store for sharpening.

If you have a gas mower, follow all safety precautions when tipping the mower, and pulling the spark plug. This [video](#) is a pretty handy resource for learning how to sharpen at home.

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## Soil Science Shed



### Meet the magical glomalin--perhaps the most important glue in the world!

Ever heard of glomalin?

Neither had we, until we started looking into carbon storage in soils. But it turns out this sticky substance holds a third of the world's soil carbon and is critical to the structure of soil.

Glomalin is exclusively produced by fungi that form a symbiosis with plant roots. The roots provide sugars and proteins to the fungi, which in exchange send miles of little filaments, known as hyphae, out into the soil to capture water and nutrients that are out of reach of the roots. Glomalin forms a protective coating and structure for the fungal hyphae. The hyphae only live days to weeks, but the glomalin can last for more than 40 years.

More glomalin in the soil leads to better root development of plants, higher microbial activity, better water infiltration, and higher air content in the soil. An organic lawn, organic perennial garden, and trees at your home could be your contribution to a healthy climate!

Want to support glomalin in your soil? [Read more about it here!](#)

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## In the Community



### Is dandelion ice cream on your dinner menu?

We were surprised to discover that you can make [ice cream from dandelion roots](#) that tastes like coffee bean and peanut butter, or [ice cream from the flowers](#) that tastes like honey.

If you try one of the recipes out, we'd love to hear the results!

Don't forget--only use dandelions that have been growing in a lawn or garden where no chemicals are used.

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