

SLOW MOW IS THE WAY TO GO

Nikki Way, GROW Commissioner

***Q:** Why didn't the Village do No Mow Til Mothers Day this year? How do we help the pollinators?*

A: You might remember that last year, GROW and the Village tried “No Mow 'Til Mother's Day,” inspired by the UK's “No Mow May” movement. But here in the Chicago area, spring warmed up fast — and so did our lawns. Grass shot up, went to seed early, and by summer, many yards became tough to manage.

It turns out, “No Mow May” works better in cooler, wetter climates like the UK. Here in Westchester, we need a more flexible approach to support pollinators *and* keep our yards manageable.

This summer, we're encouraging Slow Mow Summer.

The basic idea of “No Mow...” campaigns is to hold off on mowing to let the flowers bloom. For most of us, this means giving the plants and weeds in our lawns (like dandelions, violets, and clover) a chance to flower and become a pollinator food source, then mow before they go to seed.

“Slow Mow” means that you let your lawn grow to five inches before cutting it down to 3.5 inches. That's what we do for our lawn and we receive lots of compliments on how healthy it looks (especially while dotted with dandelions, clover, and violets!)

The best part about leaving the grass longer (as well as holding off on the spring clean-up) is that it creates the conditions for a yard full of fireflies and butterflies!

Slow Mow Summer helps to:

- **Prevent weeds:** Letting your grass grow a bit longer naturally shades out weed germination and growth, helping you spend less time pulling them — and reducing the need for chemical weed killers.
- **Promote Healthier Grass:** Taller grass fosters deeper roots and more resilient lawns, saving you time and money in the long run.
- **Enhance Wildlife Habitat:** Longer grass provides shelter and food for bees, butterflies, and fireflies.
- **Reduce Pollution:** Fewer mowing sessions mean less fuel use and emissions.

This summer, take it slow and be flexible: Adjust to a slower mowing schedule, whether you cut the law yourself or have a service involved. Watch how nature responds and tailor your approach to what works best for your yard.

Even if you like a tidier lawn, mowing less frequently can still save you time and money while benefiting your home environment. Healthier grass, less fuel use, fewer emissions, and more support for biodiversity — all with a neater appearance!

If Slow Mow isn't for you - other tips to improve your environment:

If you can't stand the thought of changing your lawncare routine, there are other ways you can contribute:

- **Chemical-Free Zones:** Avoid pesticides and herbicides that can poison the soil and the insects that call it home — fireflies included.
- **Native Landscaping:** Shrink your lawn and add a large native plant border - there are many beautiful plants, including Purple Coneflower, our Village's official flower.
- **Spread some other ground covers:** Incorporate native lawn alternatives like clover and violets to provide a continuous food source for local pollinators.

Organizations & Resources:

- Bee City USA – Mowing Guidelines section
- Wild Ones West Cook - Learning & Resources section
- Xerces Society – Pollinator-Friendly Lawn Care
- Illinois Extension – Sustainable Lawn Care

Recipe of the Month

Lentil Tacos with Roasted Cauliflower

makes 4 servings

Ingredients

1 large head of cauliflower, separated into florets
1 medium onion, 3/4 cup finely chopped
2 large cloves of garlic, finely chopped
3 tablespoons of tomato paste
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon chili powder
3/4 cup brown lentils
2 cups of vegetable broth or water
8 corn or flour tortillas
2 medium avocados
1 tablespoon fresh lemon
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
Handful of fresh cilantro or parsley

Instructions

Roast Cauliflower:

- In a large bowl, toss cauliflower with 3 tablespoons of olive oil, salt and black pepper. Arrange evenly and in a single layer on parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake for 30 minutes at 425 deg F, flipping halfway until cauliflower has crispy golden edges.

Make Lentil filling:

- In a medium pot, add to 1 tablespoon of olive oil over medium heat, onions, garlic and salt sautéing for 5 minutes, until onions soften.
- Add tomato paste, cumin, and chili powder to pot, stirring over medium heat for 1-2 more minutes.
- Add lentils and broth to pot, stirring until mixture comes to a gentle boil.
- Lower heat to simmer, uncovered, for about 30 minutes.
- Drain any liquids before making tacos.

Making Avocado Sauce:

- Combine avocados, lemon juice, vinegar, and salt. Then process in a food processor until smooth.

To assemble tacos, place a small portion of lentil mixture on warmed tortilla. Add cauliflower and drizzle with avocado sauce. Top with chopped cilantro or parsley.

Source: Amy Webster, from Eat for the Planet Cookbook, Zacharias and Stone, Abrams, New York

Have a plant-based recipe you'd like to share with the community? Send it to GROW@westchester-il.gov for consideration for future newsletters.

Green Fact of the Month

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the average gas-powered lawn mower produces as much pollution per hour as 11 gas-powered cars. Consumer Reports found that choosing an electric mower would save you money within 5 years of ownership, if not earlier.

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