

Choosing the Cutting Height

Choosing the best cutting height is one of the most important decisions you will make for the health and beauty of your lawn. The best sources of information about lawn care are universities, seed and sod producers, departments of agriculture and the volunteers with the nationwide Master Gardener program. Climate and soil can affect this decision, so the best information comes from a regional source such as the local Master Gardeners. When you locate a credible source of information you will find that they usually give a range of recommended mowing heights, such as "1.5 to 3 inches". Choosing a height at the higher end of that range has many benefits. The blades of grass act as solar collectors; they feed the plant, so taller grass is providing more energy for the lawn and encourages deeper root systems. Deeper roots mean the lawn will be more drought tolerant because during dry spells, it is the surface that dries out fastest, so the deeper soil contains more water.

Taller grass tends to invite fewer weeds. Some

weed seeds must have direct sunlight to sprout, so the shading effect of the taller grass can prevent these weeds from even getting started. Others will simply be crowded out by the tall grass.

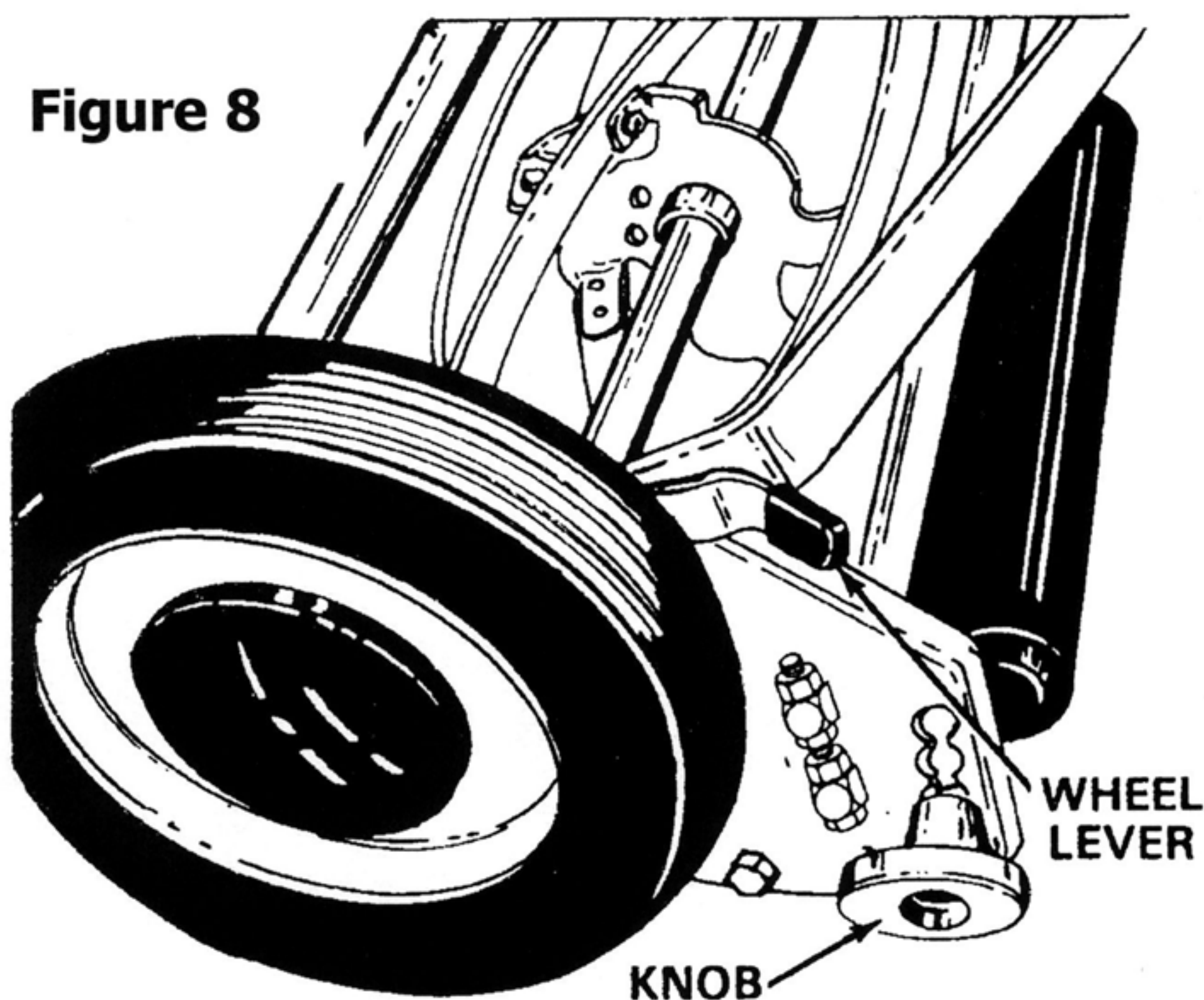
Another benefit is the frequency of mowing required. It is best to mow often enough that you are not cutting off more than one third of the length of the blade in any mowing. If you mow to a finished height of 1.5" then you must mow every time the grass grows a half inch. If you mow to a finished height of 3" then you only have to mow every time the grass grows an inch.

Weeds tend to grow faster than grass, so mowing more often will help to prevent those towering weeds that don't get caught between the reel blades and the cutter bar, and therefore do not get cut. Your taller grass will be greener, healthier, need less water, have fewer weeds and will filter out more pollutants and produce more oxygen than a lawn that is mowed too severely.

© Marjorie King, 2009

Cutting Height Adjustment

Each wheel has a lever, as shown in Figure 8, which can be placed in one of five positions. Mowing height can be further refined by moving the roller knob to one of two positions as shown in Figure 8. Please see wheel and lever setting chart Figure 9 for the mowing height settings for your mower model.



To adjust the wheel levers, tilt the mower back so that it is resting on the handle and roller. Use a 1/2" wrench to loosen the bolts on the gear housings on both wheels. Set wheel levers one at a time, making sure that both are set to the same relative position (1-5) then tighten both bolts.

To adjust the roller, tilt the mower forward so that it is resting on the handle and the wheels and the roller is up. Loosen the knobs on each side of the roller at least two full turns and move the roller to the desired position. Be sure to set both sides so that they are in the same relative position and are firmly seated in the notch.

Figure 9

Standard Wheel Settings			Large Wheel (LW) Settings		
Cut Height in Inches	Lever Setting	Knob Setting	Cut Height in Inches	Lever Setting	Knob Setting
1/2	1 1/2	2	3/4	1	2
3/4	2 1/2	2	1 1/4	2	2
1	2 1/2	1	1 1/2	3	2
1 1/8	3 1/2	2	1 3/4	4	3
1 1/2	3 1/2	1	2	4	2
1 3/4	4 1/2	1	2 1/4	5	3
2	5 1/2	2	2 1/2	5	2
2 1/4	5 1/2	1	2 5/8	5	1