Lawn Care

A discussion of the vital problems of lawn making and maintenance

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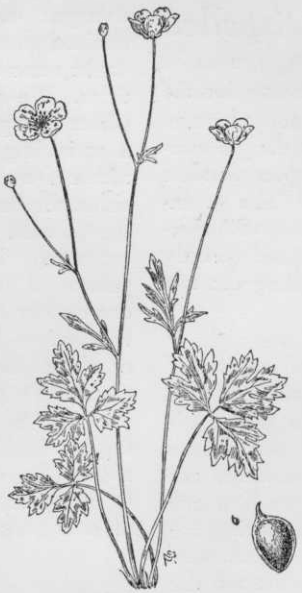
Creeping Buttercup

European Immigrant

OCCASIONALLY we shall introduce a weed which does not frequent all sections of the country, yet where appearing freely it causes serious damage to lawns. Such a weed is Creeping Buttercup. On the Atlantic seaboard all the way from Nova Scotia to Virginia it is quite common, especially in lawns that are poorly drained. Being an immigrant from Europe it apparently received such a cordial welcome that there was no inclination to go any farther west. Nevertheless in the east, west, and middle west there are several other varieties of buttercup which would be classified as native.

PREFERS THE EAST.

The east produces very few grasses from which seed is harvested for the market. Consequently such weeds as Creeping Buttercup have no direct means of spreading elsewhere. On the contrary, weeds of the middle west maturing at harvest time with the different grasses that are used in lawn mixtures have the opportunity of making their presence felt in the far corners of the country.



CREEPING BUTTERCUP
Ranunculus repens
Illustration courtesy Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station

FLOWERS QUITE PICTURESQUE.

Creeping Buttercup isn't particularly objectionable—in fact it is not without some decorative virtue. The golden yellow blooms are rather pretty but after all they don't belong in a lawn. As the name would imply, Creeping Buttercup has the faculty of taking possession of the section of one's lawn to the exclusion of anything else. After the early bloom is past the plant devotes its energy to throwing out numerous slender runners one to three feet long, from every joint of which a young plant may take root. In short the plants propagate by means of both seeds and runners. The blooms appear any time between May and July while the seeding period is between late June and August.

MEANS OF CONTROL.

Where Creeping Buttercup has formed in patches there is nothing to do except spade it up. Where there are only a few scattered plants they should be dug out by hand before the first seed develops. It is useless to resow a lawn that is infested with Creeping Buttercup without first digging the plants out. The grass will not be able to overcome them. As far as we can determine no chemical used as a spray will

entirely destroy this weed, although a bulletin of the Maryland Experiment Station published back in 1911 reports good results from an Iron Sulfate spray. The Buttercups thus treated, however, were apparently of the ordinary meadow Buttercup species and not the more persistent Creeping Buttercup. Heavy fertilization is recommended by one authority as a possible means of discouraging Buttercup. Another quite significant thing is that this weed appears most frequently on poorly drained soils so an important step in control would be the remedying of faulty drainage conditions in the lawn.

Dandelions and Plantain Dispelled

IRON SULFATE still appears to be the most successful chemical for the destruction of dandelions and plantain. Time after time it has done the job thoroughly *but* you mustn't expect wonders from a single application. The greenkeeper of a golf course near Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, commented recently on his experience in controlling the two weeds mentioned above.

It seems that his course was right in the midst of a number of abandoned farms so that it caught all the weed seeds which emanated from them. He had a real problem on his hands. This is how he met it. Five applications, two weeks apart, were made of an Iron Sulfate solution prepared by dissolving 1½ pounds of Iron Sulfate (granulated form) per gallon of water. He ran this solution through four thicknesses of cheese cloth. The area was so large that a power sprayer of 200 gallon capacity was used. Spray nozzles were used to distribute the material and ahead of the spray a drag was improvised consisting of several steel door mats. Their function was to bruise these plants so that the solution would penetrate the stems. The fairways and rough of the course in question were so covered with dandelions and plantain that five applications were necessary to put them out of business. The presence of these weeds in most lawns should not be so abundant as to require more than three iron sulfate applications.

SPECIFIC STRENGTH NOT IMPORTANT.

The method here explained is quite similar to that explained in the March-April, 1930 LAWN CARE. It will also be noted that where the experiences of three persons in applying iron sulfate have been related, the strength of the solution used has varied from 1½ pounds in 1 gallon of water to 1½ pounds in 4 gallons. Note, however, that where the strongest solution was used it was strained through cheese cloth which no doubt removed some of the coarser particles. We suggest the weaker solution where the application is being made with a sprinkling can. The flow should be rather free. Where a spray pump of either the hand or power variety is used the solution might safely be more concentrated. It is estimated that 1½ pounds of iron sulfate in solution will cover about 350 square feet (10x35). On this basis a lawn of 10,000 square feet or about one fourth of an acre would require 45 pounds of iron sulfate in about 60 to 70 gallons of water. We suggest that before the spray is applied, a drag of some nature, not heavy enough to injure the grass, be pulled over the lawn to bruise the dandelions.

When You Send a Weed

IF you wish to mail us a weed or grass specimen for identification please moisten slightly and wrap in wax paper. This insures our receiving the specimen in its original freshness.