

# Lawn Care

A discussion of the vital problems of lawn making and maintenance

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## QUACK-GRASS

### A Die Hard

A VOTE among the farming populace on the most undesirable weed would likely result in a big majority for Quack-grass. And yet this same pest makes fine hay, excellent pasture, and is unsurpassed as a sod-binder. The great objection is, it cannot be controlled. The tenacious, fibrous roots joint frequently and are very difficult to destroy. Quack-grass simply will not stay in its place; consequently we find it classified as a most damaging weed, rather than a desirable grass.

CONSIDERED FOR  
AIRPORTS.

As a possible cover for airports, Quack-grass gained some prominence a few years ago. Its toughness and resistance to adversity in general led certain airport engineers to regard Quack-grass as the ideal cover for landing fields. Such recommendations were unfortunately made before it was real-

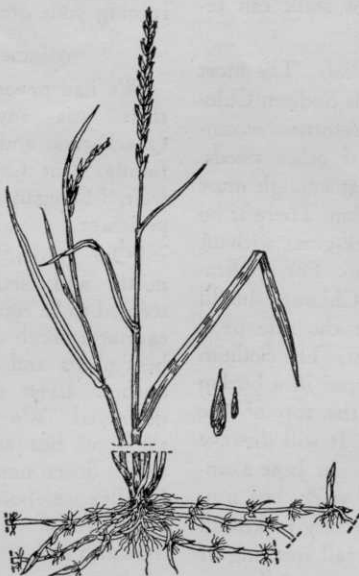
ized that seed of this species was not commercially available. Furthermore, the farms adjacent to ports with a quack-grass covering would soon be overrun with this ruinous pest. It was just another good idea with no hope of fruition.

OFTEN MISTAKEN  
FOR GOOD GRASS.

When Quack-grass appears in a lawn it may be at first mistaken for a satisfactory newcomer even though the blades are a bit wider than lawn grasses and the color an ashy green. The leaves are rough on top and smooth underneath. When the plant goes to seed it resembles the head of wheat. It is readily distinguishable, however, because the spikelets containing the seeds alternate on the stems as shown in the illustration.

THREE METHODS OF  
DESTRUCTION.

Quack-grass in lawn areas may be combated by three methods—cultivation, by the use of chemicals, and by smothering with an airtight covering such as tar paper.



QUACK-GRASS  
(*Agropyron repens*)

Also called Couch-grass, Wheat-grass, Twitch-grass, Dog-grass, Devils-grass. A perennial which propagates by seeds and creeping rootstalks.



1. *Cultivating* by starving the roots of Quack-grass through frequent and close cutting, followed by plowing and harrowing, will usually destroy the plants. This process should be started some time in advance of seeding, however. Time should be allowed for the grass to green-up again after which the harrowing (with sharp teeth) should be repeated. If a new lawn is to be started in the fall the plowing should be done in June. There should be no doubt as to the thoroughness with which the Quack-grass has been annihilated for it is almost certain to show up again when the lawn is built, for a single root stalk can reinfest it.

2. *Killing with Chemicals.* The most commonly used chemical is Sodium Chlorate which we have heretofore recommended in the control of other weeds. The difference here is that enough must be used to kill all vegetation. There is no hope of killing the Quack-grass without killing the other grass too. For application to this pest Sodium Chlorate should be made into solution at the rate of 1 pound in a gallon of water. The Sodium Chlorate crystals may be put in a burlap sack and suspended in the top of the proper amount of water. It will dissolve in from one to two hours. In June a single spraying may do the work, but usually two or three are necessary to kill all the plants. Summer and fall spraying of Quack-grass have proven especially successful.

The soil is not productive immediately after Sodium Chlorate has been used. If put on in early summer and then followed with a heavy application of lime (as much as 500 pounds per 1000 square feet) the ground can be safely seeded to new grass in September. When Quack-grass is killed in the fall, seeding may be done the following spring.

3. *Smothering.* It is the Quack-grass roots which make this pest so mischievous. They obtain their nourishment from the above surface growth. Consequently the plants can be destroyed if the food supply is cut off. In very small areas by covering with boards, tar paper, or spreading a thick blanket of manure or straw over the ground to exclude the air, the plants will in two or three months time be left withered and dead.

It becomes quite obvious that Quack-grass is a tough "animal." We caution against trying to start a new lawn on ground where this pest is at large. Kill it first and spare the necessity of later ruining your grass to do it.

QUACK MEETS QUACK.

We had never heard it intimated that there was any relationship between Quack-grass and the dialect of the duck family. But Carl L. Sherwood of Detroit, Michigan, recites the following experience:

"Our garden is rectangular and runs north and south. The Quack-grass seemed to be coming in upon us from the east and south sides. It finally got the best of us and choked out our currant bushes. Even the strawberry bed was destroyed. We pulled out the grass by the roots but whenever we broke off a root a dozen new ones seemed to appear. Finally we bought three wild ducks, fenced off the south end of the garden and put said ducks in the enclosure. It was fun to see them go after the Quack-grass. They would start at the top and follow the stem to the end of the roots.



So, according to Mr. Sherwood, a fourth method of combating Quack-grass is *ducks*.