

Lawn Care

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POA ANNUA—Grass or Weed?

THE chief difficulty in discussing this child of nature is to know whether to call it a weed or a desirable variety of grass. As its name indicates, *Poa Annua* is an annual which matures seed inside of a year and then dies. It owes its continued existence to the fact that it is a prolific seeder even when kept closely cut.

The name and fame of *Poa Annua* appear in some publications on turf grasses but it is also listed in the rogue's gallery. Each year scores of samples are received from folks who have chanced upon a patch of it in their lawns and classified it in their minds as a weed. Others send these specimens and report a beautiful and luxuriant growth in shaded areas where nothing would ever grow before. We are therefore busily engaged in telling one group how to eradicate *Poa Annua* while for the other we scour Europe to locate suitable seed, which is a real problem.



POA ANNUA,

Sometimes called Annual
Blue Grass, Spear Grass,
Walk Grass.

It is probable that *Poa Annua* was brought into this country from Europe in early Colonial times. Printed descriptions of it appear in English publications dating as far back as 1825. Even then there was considerable difference of opinion as to its value.

Poa Annua is one of the few grasses that is found throughout the United States. It even grows in tropical America in high altitudes. In the warmer sections it thrives during the winter months, but dies in summer. Some of our Southern golf courses have luxuriant winter fairways composed almost entirely of *Poa Annua*.

An Abundant Seeder

Like the ever welcome Crocus, bright green patches of *Poa Annua* are among the first harbingers of spring. This grass is frequently in flower before other varieties have even become green. Actual seed production starts in early spring and continues until hot weather when many of the old plants die. New plants

spring up in early fall to continue the seeding cycle until cold weather.

This seeding habit is the most unusual characteristic of *Poa Annua* and possibly its principal identifying one. Not only are seeds produced during the greater part of the year but they develop even when the grass is cut at less than half an inch as it is on putting greens.

Growth Not Vigorous.

The leaves of *Poa Annua* are bright green in color, making them readily distinguishable from other grasses which have more of a bluish cast. As the seed heads approach maturity the grass becomes paler in appearance. This is due in part to the whiteness of the seed heads.

Generally speaking, the plants of *Poa Annua* are not vigorous. The blades are soft and the roots are shallow. There is a slight creeping tendency but the rapid spread of *Poa Annua* in certain places is due to its seeding habits rather than its ability to send up new shoots at the stem joints. The seeds from a single plant may be responsible for a patch a foot square in a few months' time.

Since it is such a hearty spring grower it would indicate that *Poa Annua* likes a cool moist condition. This is true. It may be admired for its rich green color and thick sod but it must be mistrusted for its fickleness. As hot weather arrives and good grass is most needed and appreciated *Poa Annua* is very likely to disappear. Sometimes the first hot blasts of summer will turn it brown or cause a quick and complete fade-out.

Adapted to Shade.

One place where it is apt to survive is in moist shaded places. In fact, *Poa Annua* is usually at its best in the shade. Many are attracted to it because of that feature. But even in shade it may go out quickly because of its susceptibility to fungus diseases.

The seed is usually available commercially but at a high price since it must be harvested by hand. Sometimes such seedings are quite successful but many have tried time after time without success. *Poa Annua* is truly a temperamental variety. When its seeds are sown by nature the results are generally good, but less so when they are sown by man.

What To Do About It.

Those who like *Poa Annua* have tried special maintenance methods in an attempt to hold it through hot weather. It is difficult to hold since the plants never have much reserve strength because of abundant seed production. These efforts have been confined mainly to golf course putting greens where *Poa Annua* is sometimes preferred to other grasses. Frequent topdressing with compost combined with moderate applications of fertilizer will help to keep it. Although moisture loving, *Poa Annua* will do better in fairly well drained soils. This is probably due to the fact that this affords the shallow roots a plentiful supply of oxygen.

If *Poa Annua* is not wanted it is hard to control when growing under favorable conditions. About the only sure way is to prevent seed production by removing the individual plants in early spring before they start seeding. Even then control will not be complete because of the sprouting of dormant seeds which may have carried over from a previous season.

Some authorities recommend seeding Creeping Bent into areas infested with *Poa Annua*. While the Bent may not crowd out the *Poa Annua* it will persist during the summer months and provide a good turf in the absence of this temperamental annual variety.

There is some evidence that applications of Lead Arsenate at 10 pounds to the 1000 square feet retard the growth of *Poa Annua*. This is suggested only as an experimental treatment.

As with other vegetation *Poa Annua* may be destroyed by chemical treatments. Almost any herbicide will do the trick but, of course, other grasses in the area will suffer the same fate. Small patches may be smothered with any material that will keep out air and light thereby causing fermentation.

And Dairy Goats Relish Dandelions

HERE follows another chapter in the long series on Dandelions and the war to subdue them. We are allowing Mr. Brox a bit of leeway in his enthusiasm for goats since he seems unable to restrain himself.

"According to the index there are at least 22 articles in your 'Lawn Care' bulletins dealing with America's most prolific flower, the Dandelion. I wish to submit yet another method for the control and eradication of this plant under specific conditions. If your problem concerns a plot of ground that may be fenced and a neat small house or shed included in the enclosure, Dandelions—leaves, flower and seed—make fine pasturage for dairy goats. These thrifty little animals will select the growing weeds from the grass and convert them into fine-flavored milk for your family use. Under pasturage the grass will thrive and the weeds will disappear. With few exceptions such as Wild Lettuce, dairy goats may be used for controlling weeds and undergrowth, thickets, etc., and at the same time yield a profitable return for their care. The milk is very wholesome and is especially recommended for children as it is so easily digested and contains vital elements not found in cow's milk.

"The problem of the roadside seed blowing over your lawns may also be controlled by tethering a couple of dairy goats out during the day. There are several dairy goat clubs throughout the

country, and recording associations for the improvement of stock. 'The American Goat Herd,' Norwalk, Conn., is an excellent publication dealing with current topics of the dairy goat industry. The International Dairy Goat Record Association is an organization of dairy goat owners united for the purpose of improving and promoting the industry throughout the country. If the Dandelion Growers Union and the Dairy Goat People can get together we have the solution, as well as the 'makings' for an ice cream social on the lawn."—John P. Brox, University Place, Lincoln, Nebr.

New Use for Grasses

WE have had a great variety of uses specified for grass but the top honors for originality go to a certain gentleman from Indianapolis who wrote to us long enough ago that we may now quote him:

"Please advise me by return mail quantity and cost of sufficient ornamental red grass to sow twelve letters (all capitals) as per enclosed sketch. Green grass will be used for the background."

To the letter was attached a slip of paper on which these words were printed: "ROOMS FOR RENT." The grass was to be of a type which would allow the letters to be four inches thick and two feet tall. We could not help but think how disappointing it would be if, after getting these words beautifully spelled out in red grass letters, the rentable rooms would all be occupied.

"You were kind enough to locate five pounds of Sodium Chlorate for me when I could not find it locally. You may be interested to know that I employed this chemical and easily killed off the crabgrass that was completely taking my lawn. I raked off the dead grass and reseeded. This method saved me a lot of hard work."—W. W. Herrold, Lancaster, Pa.

Don't Feed the Birds Good Lawn Seed

"In patching irregular worn spots in the spring I have had considerable success in sowing the seed in late February or early March when weather conditions give us the daily thaw in the sun with the nightly freeze following—but have had trouble at times with sparrows eating some of the seed. However, last spring I hit upon a way to avoid this loss and give you my scheme for whatever use you may care to put it to.

"I feed the various native birds all winter long—cardinals, blue jays, etc., and inadvertently the sparrows, too, although the type of feed in my feeding tray is solely for the former birds. However, last spring I thought that just before scattering the lawn seed I would put smaller feed in the tray than the peanuts and sunflower seeds I had been using. So about a week before I planted lawn seed I started to include small 'scratch feed' in the feeding tray. Did the sparrows like it? I'll say they did, but they left my lawn alone, as long as I kept the tray filled. And I kept it full. I used up about twenty pounds of this 'scratch feed' from the time I scattered grass seed until it sprouted. But this mixture of poor grade wheat, oats, buckwheat and small size cracked corn costs only 5 cents a pound, and I figure that my investment of about \$1.00 in this saved many times that amount in grass seed which remained untouched."—Allan C. Leja, 18185 Clifton Road, Lakewood, Ohio.

"It will be of interest to you to know that we had an unusual number of cut worms here in this section during the past season. We were very successful in handling them by the liberal use of Calcium Arsenate. I was interested in the discussion of this subject in September 1935 'Lawn Care'."—J. M. Whittitt, Charleston, S. C.

"I much enjoy 'Lawn Care.' It is unbelievable that such a rich store of information covering such a long period and in such an attractive binder could be obtained for only 50 cents. Too bad it is not more generally known."—John L. Messler, Ozone Park, N. Y.

We think it's too bad, too—but we're doing our best to get the word around!

Scott Publications

This issue of "Lawn Care" is just one of a series of such bulletins published five times each year. Subscriptions are free to anyone interested. In addition you can obtain several other Scott publications on lawns, including the following:

Lawns—The amateur gardener's guide to better lawns. Condensed but very complete information on soils, fertilizing and seeding. Free.

Bent Lawns—A practical discussion of the most beautiful of all lawn grasses. Tells how to plant with either seed or stolons. Several natural color illustrations. Free.

Lawn Care—This is the thirty-ninth issue of this bulletin which has been published continuously since 1928. In previous numbers the following lawn problems have been discussed:

- 1928—Crab Grass, Dandelions.
- 1929—Moss, Grubs and Beetles, Chickweed, Buckhorn.
- 1930—Ground Ivy, Yarrow, Earthworms, Heal-all, Ants.
- 1931—Speedwell, Creeping Buttercup, Moles, Knot Grass.
- 1932—Sheep Sorrel, Quack Grass, Spurge, Trefoil, Goose Grass.
- 1933—Nimble Will, Knawel, Terraces, Shepherd's Purse, Chinch Bugs.
- 1934—Sedge, Shade, Purslane.
- 1935—Peppergrass, Shade, Crabgrass, Summer Injury to Turf.
- 1936—White Clover in Lawns.

Send 10 cents in coin or stamps for all back issues in a paper cover.