

# Lawn Care

PUBLISHED FIVE TIMES YEARLY FOR LAWNTHUSIASTS

## NATURE'S TIP—SEED IN THE FALL

TO a football enthusiast fall means October and November. To a woman it's August, the time for buying a new hat and fur coat. To those interested in fixing up a lawn it is the period from late August until November, which is the best time of year to start new grass.

Nature sees to it that uncut grasses bloom and drop their seeds in late summer. In that way she insures perpetuation of the species. The seed falls on warm soil at a time when hot days are growing shorter, cool nights longer, dews heavier, and soil moisture more favorable. These factors add up to better germination and seedling growth.

Fall is a good time to feed as well as seed lawns. It is especially important after an excessively rainy spring and summer. Too much moisture causes a heavy loss of nutrients because of leaching and rank vegetative growth. Anyone pushing a lawn mower during this past season knows that he had to cut at least twice the normal "crop" of grass if he lived within the rainy belt.

A good feeding in late August or September will restore the nutrient reserve and strengthen grass roots against the rigors of a coming winter.

There is no better time than fall to start a new lawn, to renovate a poor one or to give a beauty treatment to the well established lawn. The earlier preparation for a new lawn gets under way the better. Late August or September seeding is ideal but it's never too late to seed in the fall—as long as

the soil can be worked. If the ground can be prepared in November it's better to go ahead even though the seed may not germinate until the next spring. The lawn will be ahead of one where the final preparation is delayed until the passing of winter.

### THE FALL PROGRAM

**If broad-leaved weeds are bad** spray them away with Scotts 4-X or with a spreader application of the new dry weed-feed compound. Whenever weed control is applied it's well to wait a week or ten days before seeding.

**Crabgrass** should be subjugated by one of the means described elsewhere in this issue.

**Hard, compact areas** can be aerated by perforating with a spading fork to a depth of 3 or 4 inches.

**In tree shaded lawns** give serious consideration to an independent feeding of the trees (LAWN CARE No. 69) for the sake of the trees and to reduce the drain of food from the zone where grass roots are located.

**Feed the grass** when it is dry by applying Scotts Turf Builder at 10 pounds per 1000 square feet. It is not necessary to water in if properly applied with a spreader or broadcast evenly by hand at the prescribed rate.

**Seeding can follow immediately** after Turf Builder. Seeds need moisture to germinate and the root hairs from the sprouting grass must be able to reach soil moisture quickly. Little moisture is available to seeds lying on

top of the ground exposed to sun and wind.

If seed is sown into a rather good turf, shade from the grass will protect the seed and sprouts to a degree. But if sowing is in thin grass with sizeable bare spots some help is needed. Any roughening, perforating or loosening of the soil gives the seed a better chance. Tools that will aid in perforating the surface for better seed reception include the heavy iron garden rake, a spading fork like the kind used to dig potatoes, or a spike tamp.

A flat spade, an edging tool, a mattock or even an axe may be used to cut shallow gashes in the soil where seed may lodge, there being protected from the sun and finding a moisture supply. If the roughening operation severs roots of established grass no particular harm is done as the plants will soon heal the injury.

Most seed is sown by hand, but a mechanical spreader of good design for seeding will save both seed and time and insure more even growth.

A good practice after seeding is a shallow covering of soil that has been screened through a quarter-inch mesh screen. Some folks are expert at scattering this with a shovel, others broadcast the soil as they would seed. Only a light covering is advised, not over a quarter-inch; heavier covering will retard early growth. One cubic yard will dress 1,000 to 2,000 square feet.

Aside from nurseries or landscape contractors, greenhouses are possible sources of supply of satisfactory top-dressing soil. The latter offer what they call spent bench soil. In some communities, compost is available from mushroom growers. Black muck or raw peat is no good. The important thing is friable physical condition like a good garden loam. Do not judge on color

alone. One trouble with topdressing is that it may bring in weeds.

**Care after seeding.** If possible keep newly seeded areas moist. This hastens germination and seedling growth. Once started, watering must be continued until the grass is well rooted. If it's not feasible to follow this watering program do not start it. Sooner or later rainfall will come and when there is enough moisture the seed will germinate.

The standard recommendation for most lawns is cutting 1½ to 2 inches high, especially through hot weather. This practice should be modified as new grass starts coming up in an old lawn. Closer cutting is advised to prevent the old grass from smothering the new.

### Crabgrass Is No. 1 Pest

Dandelion, plantain, ragweed, even poison ivy no longer stand in the way of perfect lawn enjoyment. They are easily conquered with the new chemical weed controls. But crabgrass is still a fight.

Some struggle against it year after year because they do not take advantage of its real vulnerability. They do not realize Crabgrass is strictly an annual and that control is in prevention of seed ripening. Crabgrass may start seeding as early as July and continues until frost unless this natural process is tripped up. It is this seeding which sets the crop for the next year.

Ordinary mowing does not cut off the seed heads because many of them develop so close to the ground as to escape the mower blades. Raking up, mowing, catching and destroying the clippings is one effective procedure if started about mid-August and continued until heavy frost when Crabgrass dies.

Wherever Crabgrass is vigorous it tends to choke out and kill the desir-

able grasses which are not so aggressive during hot weather. Because of this early fall seeding is advised in Crabgrass stands so good grass can start as the Crabgrass subsides in September.

Lawn Care readers have exhibited great originality and initiative in their fight on Crabgrass. Witness some of their testimony:

SIRS:

I struggled with Crabgrass for several years and found that weeding was impossible. I therefore resorted to drastic means. While the Crabgrass was at the "height of its beauty" I obtained a Hauck kerosene torch such as are employed occasionally in the repair of asphalt road surfacing. I went over the lawn, applying sufficient heat to wilt the grass and in a few days the plants were completely brown. The perennial grasses, of course, were also browned but within two weeks they had revived. Only an occasional Crabgrass plant survived. It was easy to weed out these survivals.

H. KLOUMAN

Edgewood, Michigan City, Ind.

SIRS:

I have found that a good pair of edging shears with offset handle can be used to clip the Crabgrass close to or immediately under the ground surface, from which treatment it never recovers. The desirable grass roots will throw up tops as soon as relieved from the competition of the Crabgrass.

The lawn looks terrible for a week or more after this treatment, but nowhere nearly so bad as if the Crabgrass had been pulled. Freeport, Ill.

A. L. RICHE

SIRS:

About the first of August quit mowing and let the grass grow to two or three inches. The Crabgrass will head high instead of stooling out near the ground. Hire some boys to go over the lawn pulling the heads of Crabgrass while still very green.

If you have enough will power to let the lawn grow another couple of weeks and repeat the process, you will get practically all the heads. Then mow and rake and keep a sharp watch for the heads missed. Repeat the next year and by the third year you will be almost rid of the Crabgrass.

Ames, Iowa

J. B. P.

## Blight Hits Lawns As Well as Gardens

During the last few weeks the daily press has carried numerous reports from plant disease specialists telling of ruinous blight damage to tomatoes, potatoes, and other vegetable and ornamental plants.

Wet, cool weather is favorable for the development of causal fungi. Some of them, in particular the *Helminthosporium*, attack the leaves of grasses. If subsequent growing conditions are ideal, the plant may be able to throw off the disease. If not, and sudden spells of hot, humid weather follow, the result may be more than the plant can withstand.

This year the damage has been as bad or even worse than the excessively wet year of 1937—when it was felt necessary to publish a supplementary issue and devote a regular issue of *LAWN CARE* to the problem of "Turf Injury From Excess Moisture."

It was pointed out then that if the soil is saturated with water there is no room for air, and the deeper roots are drowned for want of oxygen. A shallow-rooted plant, whether in the lawn or garden, is a weaker plant, susceptible to injury from disease attacks, sudden exposure to hot sun or drying or other adverse conditions.

Damage from fungous diseases is worse when grass growth is soft and lush. In 1947, as in 1937, the fungous disease known as "Leaf Spot" was responsible for a lot of turf yellowing, then turning brown and dying. This resulted in general thinning of the turf or even complete destruction in patches.

**Leaf Spot** is so named because the disease first shows on grass blades in tiny yellowish-brown specks. As they enlarge, the center of the spots becomes straw colored and the area of injury extends until the whole leaf is discolored. The final development of the disease

carries it to the stems and roots and ultimate destruction of the plant.

Once Leaf Spot infects a grass plant, only a change in weather or growing conditions will check it.

**Damping-Off.** When seeding turf is spotted with dead patches varying in diameter from one inch to several inches it is likely that damping-off has occurred. Sometimes this fungous disease kills the sprouts before they emerge from the ground, making it appear that the seed failed to germinate. At other times the disease comes after the grass is well started. The young grass first withers, then turns brown.

**Mildew.** At times a nice stand of grass suddenly appears to have been dusted with flour. This is caused by powdery mildew, which resembles the mold that grows on old shoes left in damp places. If the mildew is wiped off the surface, it will usually be found that the grass blade is green and not injured.

**Scum.** It is not uncommon to find scum on wet lawn soils. This is a growth of algae caused by excessive moisture. It usually does no harm and disappears when weather changes.

**Toadstools** have sprouted in many lawns this year. They grow out of pieces of organic matter long buried in the soil and now decaying at an accelerated rate because of excess moisture. Usually regular mowing eliminates toadstools. They are not harmful to the lawn except in appearance.

## Weeds Down, Grass Up

It is gratifying the way readers of LAWN CARE write us of their lawn experiences. Of course we are particularly happy when they report good success with a Scott product such as our new combination lawn food plus weed control.

Here are just a few comments from the summer mail, but they are typical:

PHILADELPHIA . . . My lawn was a sight. Dandelions all over it. I dug and dug but no headway. I read of Weed/Feed. Now

all my neighbors ask why they have all my weeds and I have none of theirs . . . best I have ever seen to kill weeds and promote grass.

PROVIDENCE . . . really kills dandelions and plantain. Some accomplishment. I congratulate you.

AMHERST, MASS. . . It is magic. No other word for the way Lawn Food plus Weed Control works.

OZONE PARK, L. I. . . a little damage to grass because of hand scattering. In 4 or 5 hours big weeds lying around, soon dried up. Lawn now nice and green. Neighbors' lawns are faded.

ELYRIA, O. . . Your Weed/Feed performed a miracle on chickweed, dandelion, ground ivy, plantain. Our lawn is a transformation.

DETROIT . . . results are most gratifying. We will weed-feed again in the fall.

CHICAGO . . . used 16 boxes, just ordered 32 more. Far surpasses anything else.

DOWNER'S GROVE, ILL. . . apology due. Little slow at first but now unbelievably good results. Your spreader is tops.

ST. LOUIS . . . Lawn Care No. 94 did not exaggerate. Action on dandelions and chickweed amazing. Lawn is best ever.

RED WING, MINN. . . appreciation of Lawn Food plus Weed Control. Results favorable in only two weeks.

DEADWOOD, S. DAK. . . Dandelions and plantain twisting in few days. Particularly pleased. . . .

LOS ANGELES . . . Pesky weed known as Australian Brass Button gone in 14 days. Also dandelions and other weeds.

Frankly not every user was made this happy. Tracing these unusual cases we found: (1) excessive application; (2) soft lush grass weakened by excessive rains and fungous diseases; (3) application to grass in last stages of life because of poor growing condition, or to brand new grass not yet ready for feeding.

O M SCOTT & SONS CO.

*Scott's*

MARYSVILLE - - OHIO