

# Lawn Care

T.M. REG  
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## THE ROLE OF SOIL TESTING

Two major criteria indicate the value of a soil for turf purposes. One is physical, the other chemical.

The physical condition of a soil is the more important. This varies according to particle sizes (*texture*) and their arrangement (*structure*). Such characteristics in turn are modified by the content of decaying organic matter, called humus.

While the agronomist classifies soils into scores of narrow groups, a few broad classifications suffice in considering lawn soils. These range from the loose, coarse particles of a sand through the finer silt particles to the very fine particles of clay. In between is the happy medium of a loam; a mixture of sand, silt and clay with a generous content of humus.

Most any native topsoil provides a suitable base for turf growth unless it is so stony and coarse as to be gravel,

or the extreme opposite, namely, a tight compact clay into which no vegetation can force its roots. Of course, a good loam soil provides better growing conditions than either extreme.

The important factor in soils from a chemical standpoint is the pH value; that is, whether they are alkaline, acid or neutral. This indicates whether lime is needed to improve growing conditions. Other laboratory tests are made to measure the plant food content of a soil, such as amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and potash. These tests, however, have little practical value since they do not show whether such elements are present in forms that can be utilized by plants.

**When Tests Important.** To have a soil test made involves some effort in preparing the sample, mailing it, and a nominal charge for the laboratory work. This is fully justified in many



circumstances of which the following examples are typical:

1. Soils of established lawns should be tested, if
  - A. *The lawn is not doing well in spite of careful attention.*
  - B. *There is quick and severe injury during short periods of extreme heat or drouth.*
  - C. *Applications of lawn food or weed control chemicals result in injury rather than benefit.*
2. Soil tests for new lawns are often made for these reasons,
  - A. *Plans can be made in advance for improvement such as modification of the physical soil condition or to offset extreme acidity.*
  - B. *Tests of several samples may be advisable before deciding upon the purchase of topsoil.*
  - C. *Some folks may wish to make decisions for or against home sites as a result of a laboratory appraisal of the topsoil.*

**Getting Soils Tested.** In some states the agricultural experiment station offers soil testing service at a small fee or on a complimentary basis. Soil test service is also offered by Scotts at a nominal charge of one dollar for the first sample, plus fifty cents for each additional sample submitted at the same time.

The Scotts soil test includes a report describing the physical condition and suggestions for its improvement as well as recommendations on possible use of lime. (See Column 2.)

#### SIRS:

I would appreciate very much if you would send me your free subscription to LAWN CARE as advertised in the January issue of American Home.

Also I would like to express my approval of two of your products—SCUTL and 4-X Weed Control. I just bought a new home this past year and the rear lawn was smothered with weeds and Crabgrass. After three applications of 4-X my lawn was completely free of weeds. As for SCUTL, I have never seen anything remove Crabgrass so completely as this product. Our lawn only needed two applications of this product of yours. Thanks for SCUTL and 4-X as they have saved me hours of hard work and precious time.

DONALD SCHOEDLER.

Overland, Mo.

## SCOTTS SOIL TESTING SERVICE

The lead story carries suggestions as to when soil tests may be advisable. This may be in connection with a new lawn or plans to improve an old one. Samples of available topsoil, topdressing, humus, "black dirt" or other materials may be checked before making a substantial investment.

Better criticism of soil from established lawns can be provided if a sample of sod is submitted. This should be representative of growing conditions in the lawn. If these vary greatly it would be better to send as many samples as required to illustrate the variations. Keep each sample separate, identified as to location.

### Proper Sampling

**Established Turf.** Cut actual plugs of sod from the lawn, using a trowel or flat spade. Have them at least 4 inches square and 5 or 6 inches deep. Wrap firmly in waxed paper so section reaches laboratory as it was taken from the ground.

**Loose Materials.** About a pint of soil is required. The sample should be representative of the whole. Take materials from various locations and mix together to make a composite sample. Do not mix soils that are conspicuously different. Instead wrap and label each type separately.

**Containers.** Coffee cans or any tin cans holding at least a pint with tight fitting lids make good containers for composite soil samples. Freezer canisters also make suitable shipping cartons but require outer wrapping for added protection.

The use of glass jars and bottles is discouraged because of breakage.

Sod and soil plugs require careful wrapping in substantial shipping cartons made to fit the sample. Loosely packed sod samples arrive badly scrambled making diagnosis of the sod and root condition difficult.



The darker, richer color resulted from a lawn feeding. Note the lighter off-color strips in right background where operator missed with the spreader.

## Mailing Samples

Advise by letter the number of samples being sent, stating the lawn problem or question. If soil is from an established lawn, describe past experience in as much detail as possible. Do not place letter inside package as that would subject the entire shipment to first class postage. Instead—

1. *Put letter in envelope properly addressed, carrying letter postage, and paste to outside of package.*
2. *Place sender's return address on package as well as the address of the laboratory. Affix stamps to package at parcel post rates.*

Those residing in the Allegheny Mountains or east of them or in any Jap Beetle quarantine zone should forward samples to:

O. M. SCOTT & SONS Co.  
RIDGEFIELD, N. J.

All others send to:

O. M. SCOTT & SONS Co.  
MARYSVILLE, OHIO

Do NOT SEND REMITTANCE with sample. A bill for the services will be sent with the report, on the basis of one dollar for the first sample, plus fifty cents for each additional submitted at the same time.

## SEED SITUATION

In times like these, there is much talk about scare buying. People try to anticipate their future needs and buy ahead. It is difficult for a seed business to do that because of the problem of perishability.

Seed scarcities usually result from drouth, crop injury at harvest time, late spring freezes, floods, plant diseases and, occasionally, to a short labor supply when the crop is ready for harvest. Because grass seed comes from such a large geographical area, almost the entire world, the same factors seldom affect all varieties at once.

Only a small percentage of any harvest will make Scott quality. In two seasons in the early forties, there were times in late spring when there was not enough Scott quality seed to take care of all the demand. Frankly, no such emergency is expected this spring although this is hardly the time for bold statements. Airfields, army camps, defense plants, and aid to Europe can make quite a drain on seed supplies.

In the early part of the year, Scott seed stocks are ample and the quality, thanks to constantly improved harvesting and processing techniques, was never so high.

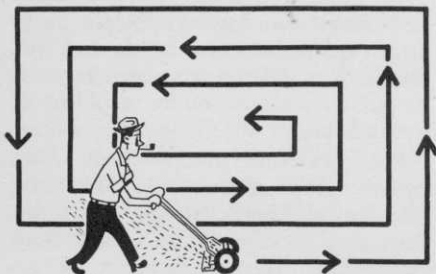
## Grass Clippings

To fall or not to fall, that is the question.

In answering this question to the satisfaction of all, Mr. Shakespeare would come in mighty handy. It is controversial only to this extent—is the lawn being maintained for its beauty or to return to the ground an inconsequential amount of humus?

The LAWN CARE position has been frequently stated. The clippings are probably of more value used elsewhere than on the lawn. They have little or no plant food but do serve as a mulch for gardens or shrub beds. If allowed to dry on the ground 24 hours after mowing, the bulk necessary to rake up is greatly reduced.

Our best story about clippings came some years ago from a housewife who apparently had fought a heated battle with her husband on the subject. She wanted us to umpire the bout, provided we sided with her. She stated her position and gave us this helpful hint: "It is absolutely necessary that you agree with me because I have had very harsh words over this."



A recent suggestion for "easier mowing" comes from LAWN CARE reader W. Philip McBride of Evanston, Illinois: "After the lush growth of spring is past, I detach the catcher and let the clippings fall. However, I mow completely around the plot, always walking in a counter-clockwise direction. Since the mower throws the clippings to the left, that is into the uncut grass where they are cut over and scattered again when the grass is cut. In mowing along a walk, it is well to remember that the mower throws the clippings to the left. By walking in the proper direction, the clippings can be thrown back on the lawn or on the walk as desired."

## "Scotts" TRADE NAME

Federal Judge McCarthy of the Boston District Court permanently enjoined one Leslie N. Harvey of Leominster, Massachusetts, from illegal use of the trade name "Scotts" on grass seed and similar products.

This was the outcome of a court action arising from the sale of an inferior blend of seed purported to be the genuine "Scotts Seed" long advertised and sold as a specific brand in Massachusetts and other New England states.

The company is ever alert to prevent misuse of its trade-mark but it never learns about many such cases. Therefore, the buying public wishing Scotts Seed is urged to accept it in only the original sealed packages, and to make such purchases from known sources.

## Not Burn, Starvation

Quite often folks write in after plant food applications saying they seemed to have yellowed streaks of grass and that the grass seems to be dying. The assumption is that burning is the cause. On investigation, it is usually found that instead of burn, the streaks are the result of starvation, that is, they were missed in the application of plant food.

### SIRS:

"I have now tried your Weed & Feed on a portion of my lawn where I had quite a lot of weed growth. I am glad to say this has disappeared, which is a tribute to the efficiency of the weed killer content of the product. The grasses appear to have been stimulated, so that it would seem your "Weed & Feed" works under Australian conditions just as well as in your own country.

DENHAM BROS. PTY. LTD.  
Rockhampton, Australia.

O M SCOTT & SONS CO.



MARYSVILLE - - OHIO

EVERY PACKAGE OF SCOTTS LAWN CARE PRODUCTS BEARS THIS TRADE-MARK AND IS SEALED FOR YOUR PROTECTION