

Lawn Care 47

A discussion of the vital problems of lawn making and maintenance

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Compost for Lawn Topdressing

EVERY golf course that makes any pretense of having good greens keeps a supply of compost for use in topdressing them several times during the year. The purpose of this treatment is to maintain an even surface by working this material into the low, uneven places, and to provide a surface of new soil for the grass roots.

Compost is an intimate mixture of humus-forming materials with soil and sand. After mixing, it is allowed to decompose for a period of time so that weed seeds are destroyed and the number of friendly soil bacteria increased. A good compost, containing a liberal quantity of organic matter, is not only favorable for the multiplication of bacteria, which liberate plant food to grass, but also promotes aération of the soil.

MAKING COMPOST.

The humus-forming materials for a compost pile may consist of animal manures, peat moss, or other partially decayed vegetable matter.

The actual compost pile is built up in alternate layers of soil, manure or substitute organic materials and sand. The proportions will vary according to the quality of soil used in the pile. If it is a good garden loam equal parts of soil and manure with one-fourth part coarse sand should give good results. If the soil tends toward a heavy clay as much as two parts manure and one part sand may be necessary. With real sandy soils, ordinary clay should be substituted for sand and at least two parts of manure used to one of the native sandy soil.

As the alternate layers are being placed commercial fertilizer should be mixed into the mass, using about one-half pound to a cubic yard.

ONE YEAR NEEDED.

A compost pile may be built up of 8 or 10 layers of these various materials. It should be kept moist, and turned over every two or three months. This aids the decomposition process and insures a complete mixture of soil and organic matter. At least a year is needed for thorough decomposition and destruction of weed seeds. This latter is most important as there are sure to be many weeds in the materials used for compost.

After the compost is ready it should be screened through a quarter inch mesh screen following which it is ready for use as a topdressing material. The coarse material should be saved and incorporated into the next pile. If possible a new compost pile should be started every year so that a continuous supply of topdressing is available.

DISTRIBUTING TOPDRESSING.

Probably the easiest way to topdress a lawn, without purchasing special equipment, is to dump the material in small piles and then spread it out over the turf using the back of an iron rake. It can be worked down into the turf with the same implement or with a stiff straw push broom. Sometimes a flexible metal door mat is used. For the average lawn, topdressing should be at least one-fourth inch deep. If the surface is very uneven as much as a half inch can be applied without smothering the grass. To cover a lawn area of 1000 square feet to a depth of a quarter inch about one cubic yard of compost is needed.

SEEDING AND FERTILIZING.

Seeding the lawn before topdressing is an excellent practice. The compost makes a fine covering and bed for the seed. A lawn can also be fertilized at the same time by mixing the proper amount of commercial plant food into the topdressing material. Mixing should be thorough.

USE OF LEAVES IN COMPOST.

While it is possible to incorporate manures and peat directly into the compost pile, leaves or other decomposed matter should be allowed to rot at least a year. These materials should be placed where they will be kept moist at all times and stirred occasionally. Decomposition will be faster if a complete mineral fertilizer is incorporated into the mass at the rate of about one pound to every cubic yard of composting material. A sprinkling of lime is also beneficial.

Nurse Crop Unnecessary

WE quote from F. F. Rockwell, landscape architect and well-known author of books on horticulture:

"Nurse crops, such as oats or rye, are sometimes advocated, especially with spring sowing. If the seed mixture contains Rye Grass or even Redtop, these will provide all the nursing necessary for the finer grasses. My last experience with a nurse crop was planting oats on a lawn of several acres on a large estate. The owner insisted upon this being done on the theory that the oats, sprouting quickly, would provide desirable shade for the grass plants. A fine stand was secured and everything went fine until the oats had to be cut. Some scorching hot days followed a week or two later, and the tender grasses, without the shade to which they had become accustomed, were literally burned up."

The Simple Art
of MOWING

TELLING a man how and when to mow his lawn sounds like advising him how and when to cut his hair, but the one is a matter of taste while the other is good or bad practice for the welfare of the grass. To keep a lawn looking well the grass must be cut oftener than it should be cut to keep it healthiest. In other words the constant clipping of a lawn tends to remove much of the fertility which has been stored in the grass blades. Thus you see the necessity for frequent fertilization. Through its growing process grass feeds upon the plant food and stores it up in the leaves or blades. When the catcher or rake removes the clipped blades it likewise removes a certain amount of stored up plant food which should periodically be replaced. It is therefore claimed by many authorities, including C. J. Willard of the College of Agriculture at Ohio State University, that a lawn "should be cut often enough that the clippings can be left on the lawn instead of removed." Professor Willard has some very definite views on this subject and we quote him further: "The higher the grass is cut the better for the grass and certainly it should not be 'scalped' just before periods of little or no growth, such as come in July and August." We shall have some further comments to make about mowing, in a fall issue of *LAWN CARE*, for fall mowing practice has much to do with the ability grass has to withstand severe winters.