

Lawn Care

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

PUBLISHED FIVE TIMES YEARLY BY O. M. SCOTT & SONS CO., MARYSVILLE, OHIO
DISTRIBUTED FREE TO LOVERS OF BEAUTIFUL TURF

August 1938

ELEVENTH YEAR

Number 51

PROTECTING SEEDINGS WITH BURLAP

IN RECENT years new advantages have been found to recommend the use of burlap as a protective covering for freshly seeded lawns.

The benefit from protecting a terrace or bank is well appreciated by those who have had the disheartening experience of a heavy rain washing deep gullies in a newly seeded lawn and carrying away good seed and topsoil.

Another advantage of the use of burlap is that it makes seeding safer in late spring or in summer. This applies to both flat and sloping areas. The covering reduces evaporation from the soil and also holds reserve moisture, both of which promote quicker and more complete germination as well as more rapid seedling growth.

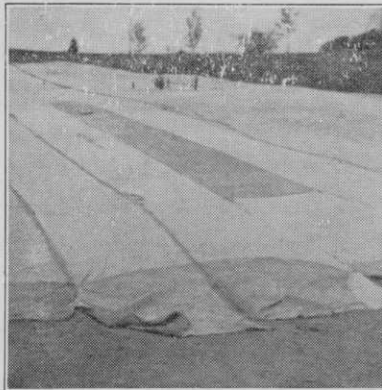
While burlap does not remove the necessity of watering, it does reduce the frequency with which sprinkling must be done. There is less danger of the young grass dying of thirst than when a hot-weather seeding is not given such protection.

Another important feature of the burlap covering is that it greatly reduces

the growth of weeds. The weed seeds in the soil may germinate but their broad leaves can not penetrate the burlap. Most of them eventually die for want of light and air while the grass continues to grow right through the burlap.

There are other materials such as

muslin, cheese cloth or mosquito netting which may be used instead of burlap, when the purpose is only to prevent washing. These lighter weight materials do not retain much moisture. Their advantage lies in the fact that they can be left in place until they disintegrate. Such a practice is not advisable in the case of burlap, as it decomposes slowly and before disappearing is apt to cause con-



Strips of burlap protecting a new seeding. Advantages claimed by users of this method are safe midsummer seeding, elimination of seed loss by washing, higher seed germination and reduction of weeds.

siderable trouble in mowing.

Selecting the Material

It is important to select the proper grade of burlap for covering new seedings. The most satisfactory weight has been found to be $7\frac{1}{2}$ ounce or 20 gauge burlap. The texture of this grade allows blades of grass to penetrate but

not the broader leaves of weeds. In addition it has capacity for holding considerable water. Heavier burlap has a closer weave which prohibits the penetration of grass blades. Lighter burlap does not hold moisture as efficiently and is less effective in controlling weeds.

In quantities sufficiently large to take care of a home lawn of the average size, $7\frac{1}{2}$ ounce burlap may be purchased from companies dealing in bags and waste burlap. The strips are usually 36 to 40 inches wide and cost about $6\frac{1}{2}$ cents a yard. Enough burlap to cover 1000 square feet costs about \$7.50.

For larger projects bales of 2000 yards can be obtained. This will cover about 20,000 square feet or one-half acre. The 40 inch width costs about \$110 per bale or $5\frac{1}{2}$ cents per yard.

The initial cost is not prohibitive in view of the fact that the same material may be used at least 6 or 8 times.

Laying the Burlap

Where a protective covering is to be used, the seed bed is prepared in the usual manner. The top soil is thoroughly pulverized and the proper grass food uniformly added before the area is seeded. After seeding, the soil is raked very lightly and then rolled with a medium weight roller to bring the seed in closer contact with the soil particles bearing moisture and nutrients.

Following this the strips of burlap are placed carefully over the seeding. They are slightly overlapped to insure complete coverage and then anchored in place with large nails 3 feet apart.

Once the burlap is in place it must not be allowed to dry out. This necessitates frequent waterings which are essential to any type of summer seeding. Abundant moisture insures quick and thorough germination. Actually, less water is required to provide this amount of moisture than would otherwise be needed because the burlap has

a great waterholding capacity and cuts down evaporation.

Each watering should be thorough so the surface soil beneath the burlap is moistened. Systematic movement of automatic sprinklers or the hose nozzle will make certain that every portion receives the needed amount of moisture.

Removing the Covering

When the young grass blades have penetrated the burlap about one inch, it is time to remove the cover. This is usually around ten days after sowing the seed, depending, of course, on the type of seed and the weather. The burlap should not be allowed to remain in place so long that a rank and branched growth is made through it. If this happens, considerable grass will be pulled up when the burlap is removed.

Sudden exposure to a scorching sun is detrimental to the new grass. It is advisable to take off the burlap on a cloudy day or at least in the late afternoon. Even then it will receive somewhat of a shock but this can be lessened by abundant watering.

All of the nails should be removed before the strips are taken up and not allowed to remain in the soil where they may later ruin the lawn mower. In rolling up the strips care must be taken that some of the grass is not caught in the roll and pulled out. There will be narrow streaks in the turf where overlapping of the burlap has retarded growth, but these will soon disappear.

After being deprived of its protective cover the newly established lawn should be watered less frequently but each time more thoroughly. Such a procedure sends moisture to a lower level, encouraging a deep root system. The healthy turf becomes increasingly stronger.

The grass is usually ready for its first mowing in a week or so after the burlap is taken off. Use a well sharpened hand mower. A dull or poorly adjusted mower will bruise the tips of the blades

causing them to turn brown and giving an ugly brownish cast to the lawn.

Moisture Essential

This method of establishing a lawn is not free of possible difficulty. If, for any reason, the covering material is allowed to dry out, the temperature beneath it will become excessive on a warm day and the young grass will be injured. This system works better on well drained soils. On poorly drained soils, a soggy condition beneath the



Result of burlap covering is shown in turf at the bottom. Grass at the top was not protected.

burlap may result with a consequent loss of grass from "damping off" or other fungus diseases.

Many Uses

For quick results on level ground or terraces this method of obtaining a turf is less expensive and more satisfactory than sodding. It is difficult to obtain sod which is weedfree and composed of the right grasses. Besides chancing the introduction of field weeds one faces the trouble of finding a source of sod which is so conveniently located that it will withstand and recover the shock it receives in transplanting.

Burlap coverings offer a big advantage in cases where it is desirable to get a good turf in a hurry. It lends itself especially well to planting a lawn around a new home finished in the late spring.

A burlap covering was used successfully in the recent planting of a football field at Portland, Maine. The seeding was started in June and because of the covering the grass had formed a thick sod by fall. In Jamestown, New York, some 40 acres of good turf were established by this method on steep slopes at Sunset Hill Cemetery. On such large areas just a portion is planted at a time. When the burlap can be removed from the first portion it is used to cover a second installment and so on until the job is completed.

The shading which this material affords definitely reduces germination of crabgrass seeds. This pest of late spring and summer sowing requires strong sunlight for its vigorous development.

This method of protecting the seed bed reduces to a minimum the cultural loss that causes spotty turf. In ordinary plantings some seed is blown away by the wind, and some is washed into the soil too deep for germination.

The use of burlap may be found advantageous even during the fall season. Although weather conditions at this time of year are quite generally favorable, even quicker and better results can be obtained if the new seeding is kept constantly moist. This is easily accomplished by covering with burlap and watering once or twice daily.

The Wallpaper Method of Planting a Lawn

FOR the benefit of those who missed the story recently published in several magazines, we shall briefly review the details of what is known as a "pre-sown lawn." An English printer,

Vincent Hartley of Lancashire, could stand his mediocre, moth-eaten lawn no longer. He attributed his failure to establish a uniform turf to uneven seeding, foraging birds and washing of the seed. His method of solving the problem was to place seed in rows between strips of wall paper. These were glued together and placed over a smoothly prepared seed bed. A light covering of screened soil and faithful sprinkling followed. He reported gratifying results and because the idea was novel even if not altogether practical, Mr. Hartley made four pages in "Life" and hundreds of American newspapers. Furthermore he raised the eyebrows of thousands of desperate home owners who had always thought there must be an easy way to get a good lawn and were ready to give Mr. Hartley credit for having found it.

Readers of "Lawn Care" will want to consider these observations. First, authorities are of the opinion that no appreciable amount of seed is lost to birds. Second, please note that in preparing a seed bed Mr. Hartley took painstaking care. He had his soil in wonderful condition, even sifting the top layer. After laying the paper he covered it with more fine soil. Such careful preparation is a feature many people overlook and the thing about which Mr. Hartley had probably not been so meticulous in his previous efforts to get a lawn. Third, in view of this favorable start with a well-prepared seed bed the chances are that even better results would have been obtained with a mechanical spreader which will distribute seed evenly into the soil without the handicap of paper to retard its growth. Fourth, because paper acts as insulation seed can not get moisture readily from beneath. Consequently more sprinkling is necessary than un-

der the ordinary method of seeding. And finally, according to the Hartley figures, the cost of the better grade of seed would be four cents per square foot which means \$40.00 for enough paper to cover one thousand square feet not including labor, fertilizer and topsoil. An acre of lawn would require an outlay of approximately \$1700 exclusive of labor.

So while the idea brought forward by Mr. Hartley is intriguing, we are inclined to join the ranks of horticulturalists who thought the story good reading but poor gardening.

Scott Literature

Lawn Care—This issue is No. 51. Subjects featured in previous issues include:

- 1928 Plantain, Dandelions, Compost.
- 1929 Moss, Web Worms, Chickweed, Buckhorn.
- 1930 Ground Ivy, Yarrow, Earthworms, Heal-all, Ants.
- 1931 Speedwell, Creeping Buttercup, Moles, Avoiding Summer Injury, 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, Crab Grass, Summer Injury to Turf.
- 1936 White Clover, Poa Annuua, Henbit, Fall Seeding, Foxtail.
- 1937 Honeycombed Seeding, Control of Grubs, Orchard Grass, Soils, Injury from Excess Moisture.
- 1938 Liming Acid Soils, The Dandelion, Chinch Bugs.

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