

Lawn Care

REG. U. S. PAT OFF

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THE SPRING LAWN PROGRAM

SPRING is the season for Nature's children to waken but not all of them get up at the same time. Some wait until the earth gets warm, while others shiver into early activity. Insects, birds, trees and flowers—yes, even grass and weeds choose different times to roll out. Weeds, those grouches of the plant family, get up late. While these worthless loafers remain under the covers of dormancy, there is a good chance for grass to get the jump on them.

Long before snowdrifts vanish from protected corners, the gayly colored seed catalogs arrive, prompting those good intentions to have a better garden. Plans for the season may be taking shape but it will be some time before the weather permits actual work in the flower garden. No such delay is necessary in the case of the lawn, which is a fitting complement to any garden. Most of the spring lawn program can be completed while the weather is still cold, allowing more time later for other gardening activities.

Grass seed is not injured by freezing temperatures. In fact the practice of

seeding before frost has left the ground or even on top of a late thin snow is winning more converts every year.

Seeding on Honeycombed Soil

This method takes advantage of a soil condition not found at other seasons. The ground is still partially frozen and therefore not sticky. It is "honeycombed" or pockmarked as a result of alternate freezing and thawing. The cracks and checks afford an ideal lodging place for the seed and Nature covers it in her own way by the subsequent action of the weather. Thus the necessity of raking in the seed is eliminated.

Many early sowers prefer to plant on one of the last, thin snows. The white surface makes the seed more visible, aiding even distribution. Thus uniform growth can be expected. As the snow melts, the seed is carried into the ground to the ideal depth for good germination. Such planting should not be attempted on steep slopes where melting snow may wash away the seed.

When seed is planted on honey-



combed soil or on a thin snow, no further attention need be given the lawn until such time as the ground is free from frost and excess moisture. Then it should be rolled. Even though the new grass has started, it will not be damaged if a light roller is used.

Feed Lawns Early Too

Cold weather is also a good time to feed the lawn. Turf is dormant then, so there is no need to water in the grass food. The same melting snow and the alternate freezing and thawing carry it down into the root zone. There is no appreciable loss of nutrients during cold weather so the efficiency of the grass food is not impaired.

Advantages of Early Seeding

While cold weather lawn work is gaining in popularity, still most lawns receive no attention until sunshiny days arrive to coax the homeowner out of doors. Then is another good time to fix up the lawn and undoubtedly it is more enjoyable. However, any unnecessary delays in seeding should be avoided. Although the ground is still cool it will soon warm up enough to germinate seed.

Overcoming Competition

Grass must always run a race against weeds and drouth. The send-off it is given will greatly determine whether it comes out victor or vanquished. Fortunately, most annual weeds are handicapped with a slow start and grass can keep ahead of them if it is planted early.

An early start for the lawn is also important to give it a safe lead on hot, dry weather. Grasses which produce permanent lawns are slower developing. Ample time should be allowed for them to send their roots deep into the soil, out of danger from a scorching sun.

Wherever the ground is shaded by trees, early feeding and seeding afford still another advantage. The grass has

a chance to become firmly entrenched before leaves appear on the trees. Being well established, it is better able to thrive in the shade and meet the competition of the tree roots. Each day's start in advance of the shade means added strength to new grass.

Waking Old Lawns

Unless the seed has been sown earlier on frozen ground or a light snow, all leaves, twigs and other debris should first be raked off.

Provided there is an available supply of good, weedfree soil, a light topdressing will do much to improve your lawn. It trues up the surface, encourages the old grass to spread out and gives the new seeding a quicker start. Use at least one-half cubic yard of screened topsoil per 1000 square feet or one bushel of soil per 100 square feet. Distribute this material over the surface, applying it a little heavier in the low spots, and work it down around the base of the grass with the back of a garden rake.

Provide Proper Food

Always apply a good lawn fertilizer before seeding. Then the new planting will have adequate nourishment for its early growth and the old grass will be benefited as well.

Grass food can be mixed with the topdressing material and both applied in one operation. However, if a mechanical fertilizer distributor is available it is easier to put on the topdressing first, then apply the grass food over the surface.

Follow feeding with the seeding. There are special seeds for shaded areas receiving less than half a day of sunshine. Unless the lawn is so thin as to require complete rebuilding, 3 pounds of seed per 1000 square feet will thicken up an old lawn in either sun or shade. Bare spots should be gone over twice to insure ample seeding.

Purpose of Rolling

Spring is the only time necessary to roll established lawns. Rolling has but one object: to press grass roots gently back into the soil from which frost has raised them.

It is imperative to choose the right soil condition, otherwise rolling will do more harm than good. The ground should be entirely free of frost, but not sticky. The surface must be only partially dry—damp but not wet. Lawns on sandy soil can be rolled without injury while the ground is wet, but most other soils, particularly clay, will be badly compacted. When dry they become hard as rock, halting the development of the grass roots.

Regardless of the soil, a heavy roller is injurious to the turf. A water ballast roller, either empty or not over one-third full, is sufficiently heavy. Trying to iron out the high spots with a heavy roller is especially damaging. Any low areas in the surface should be filled with topdressing.

Building New Lawns

Constructing a new lawn involves working of the soil. In the spring, clay soils cannot safely be worked until they have dried out enough to prevent caking. Although this may delay cultivation, it is better to defer planting than to sow on a poorly prepared seed bed.

After the surface has been loosened by spading, a hand-pushed garden cultivator is convenient for breaking up the clods. Hand raking afterwards makes the surface soil fine enough for seeding. On larger areas this is done by plowing, discing and harrowing.

At this point some thought ought to be given to the drainage. A slope of about one inch in every ten feet will ordinarily provide sufficient drainage and at the same time produce a pleasing appearance.

Just before the seed is sown, plentiful supplies of grass food should be dis-

tributed and raked into the top two inches of soil. This produces stronger and faster growing plants, an advantage of prime importance in the race with weeds and drouth.

Sowing the Seed

Four to six pounds of high quality seed is enough to produce a solid turf on each 1000 square feet. A mechanical seeder does the planting more evenly than hand broadcasting. Whatever method is used, divide the seed into two parts, sowing one portion lengthwise of the area, the other crosswise.

It is best, of course, to sow on a calm day so the wind does not blow the seed and distribute it unevenly. Showers frequently fall with sufficient force to wash some seed away and it is a worthwhile precaution to rake it in so that it is lightly covered by about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch of soil. Rolling will then hold it firmly in place. More complete details about building new lawns may be found in *Good Lawns*, described on the back page of this bulletin.

As the days get warmer, once-lazy weeds begin to show signs of activity. This is the time to keep a sharp eye on them. It is much easier to eliminate weeds as they appear, than to wait until they have taken possession of the lawn.

First Mowing

Wait until the grass is 2 or 3 inches high before the first mowing, but do not let it get long enough to topple over. Set the mower to cut about 2 inches high. This adjustment is made by lowering the wooden roller as described in *Lawn Care* for March 1939 where mowing is discussed in full.

Deferred Planting

While early feeding and seeding pay greater dividends in healthy lawns, seeding later in the spring does not necessarily doom a lawn to failure. It is much better to plant seed on a thin area or bare spot even in midsummer

than to leave it wide open for the invasion of troublesome weeds. Late spring and early summer plantings do make successful lawns, but they require more weeding and careful watering. The disadvantage of unfavorable weather can be offset with intelligent care.

Spring Tree Feeding

On most lawns trees play an important part. Their strong competition with the grass beneath them is recompensed by the cooling shade they afford in midsummer. That trees may continue to provide enjoyment year after year, experts recommend they be fertilized each spring. This practice is wholly approved by turf experts, too, for they know a well fed tree does not rob grass into starvation. Much of the problem of keeping good lawns in the shade is solved by keeping the trees well fed.

The correct fertilizer for trees is the same as the correct one for grass. It is therefore convenient as well as important to include tree feeding in your spring lawn program.

Much Comment About Poison Ivy Article

Interesting data and a bit of by-play greeted the last issue of this bulletin which featured Poison Ivy. Space here permits only meager reference to the many pertinent comments for which we are most grateful. Two readers took us to task for mentioning that Indians were reported to have eaten Poison Ivy leaves, thereby hoping to obtain immunity against ivy poisoning. Of course we did not recommend this method of immunization any more than we would advocate the old Indian custom of scalp-

ing as a dandruff cure. But more about Poison Ivy later for some most enlightening stories were received, especially from the New England States where the weed has made heavy inroads.

Scott Publications

Lawn Care—Subjects featured in previous bulletins include:

- 1928 Plantain, Sodium Chlorate.
- 1929 Compost, Moss, Web Worms, Iron Sulphate, Buckhorn.
- 1930 Ground Ivy, Yarrow, Earthworms, Heal-All, Ants.
- 1931 Speedwell, Creeping Buttercup, Moles, Knotweed.
- 1932 Sheep Sorrel, Quackgrass, Spurge, Trefoil, Goosegrass.
- 1933 Nimble Will, Knawel, Terraces, Shepherd's Purse, Ground Covers.
- 1934 Sedge, Shade, Purslane.
- 1935 Peppergrass, Crabgrass, Summer Injury.
- 1936 Clover, Poa Annuua, Henbit, Fall Seeding, Foxtail.
- 1937 Honeycombed Soil, Grubworms, Orchard Grass, Soils, Injury from Excess Moisture.
- 1938 Dandelions, Chinch Bugs, Burlap Protection, Wild Garlic.
- 1939 Chickweed, Mowing, Dandelions, Fall Seeding, Poison Ivy.

If your file is not complete, please be sure to ask for the missing issues. A full set of bulletins with index in stiff paper binding will be sent for 25c.

Binder—An attractive loose-leaf binder which contains all Lawn Care bulletins, with ample room for future issues—\$1.00 postage paid.

Good Lawns—The amateur gardener's guide to better lawns. Contains complete outline for building new lawns and improving old ones. Free.

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