

Lawn Care

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CRABGRASS—OPEN SEASON

THERE is one weed on which the wrath of all lawn owners annually descends. It is Crabgrass. Some folks take up the cause of Dandelions, admitting a certain fondness for the bright blossoms which greet the spring. Others bespeak a kindly word for a few of the dainty flowering weeds, but Crabgrass has few friends and it loses even these the minute it starts turning purple in the fall.

Such weeds as Dandelions, Buckhorn, Plantain and Chickweed used to vie for attention from spring until winter. Now these present no problem for they are easily sprayed away with Scotts 4-X. The grass type of weeds are immune which makes Crabgrass even more the No. 1 lawn pest.

While there are chemicals which kill Crabgrass, they are not selective enough. They also kill turf grasses or discolor the lawn for so long a time that it is questionable whether they should be used.

Scientists are continuing their search for some easy control, some method that all homeowners can use without fear, something non-poisonous that can

be sprayed or dusted over a lawn without great expense and without damage to the desirable lawn grasses. Meanwhile, a free exchange of information and experiences with Crabgrass may help others with their war on this pest.

Wolf In Sheep's Clothing

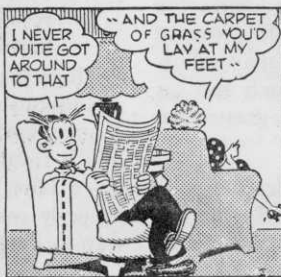
It is summer when Crabgrass first sneaks into a lawn, unnoticed while the weed is in the two-leaf stage. No one is concerned at the time. The blades are green, usually fresher looking than other grasses in mid-year. Also the blades of young Crabgrass plants are not too coarse. Most people are unaware that it is filtering into their lawns.

Once it has secured a good foothold it changes character and becomes an ugly menace. Almost overnight those wiry seed heads appear, the stems become stiff and resist mowing, and Crabgrass has again won the day.

To heap trouble on trouble the plants next turn a reddish purple as their seeds ripen and fall to infest the soil. Frosts kill the roots and turn the foliage brown.

Blondie

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By Chic Young

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Crabgrass seeds are present in almost all soils, a fact resulting from the prolific nature of this weed. A single plant has been known to produce a quarter of a million seeds. In addition, seed can be easily introduced in a lawn by birds, on the soles of shoes or by the use of manure or soil topdressings.

An English author in referring to Crabgrass and its control is very terse in his comment. "Hand weeding," he



says, "is usual." In the weed manuals of practically every country, Crabgrass is listed as one of the most despised lawn pests. It is newsworthy that in Shanghai the most

common turf weed is Crabgrass. It is referred to as "an annual summer species that invades turf rapidly, causing a great deal of labour to effect its removal."

So it is obvious that wherever Crabgrass persists it employs the same tactics and merits the same unsavory reputation.

Most discussions about Crabgrass deal with descriptive matter rather than methods of eradication. The reason is that no altogether satisfactory control has been developed.

Use Of Chemicals

There are a few chemicals in liquid form being sold in garden stores for the control of Crabgrass. If properly used at the right time they may subjugate Crabgrass but it is touch and go whether or not the desirable grasses are harmed at the same time.

Any application of chemicals should be made in July or August. September is too late to do any good because by

then Crabgrass has already done its harm in maturing seeds for next year's crop. Being annual, this year's plants are knocked out by the first frost.

There are some effective cultural control methods which also have to be started in summer. These are discussed at length in LAWN CARE No. 70.

It is interesting to note that some weeds, Dandelions for instance, which go to seed after spraying with Scotts 4-X, produce seeds which will not germinate. Time will tell whether lawns kept clean by this means will show any decrease in their population of Crabgrass. Some folks who sprayed for other weeds last fall report they have less Crabgrass this year.

What To Do

In this bulletin are several suggestions on the Crabgrass problem sent in by readers of LAWN CARE. They are worth reading because they speak of results obtained.

No matter what other treatment is tried, a Crabgrass infested lawn should be given the following first aid in August, September or October:

- (1) Mow the lawn with the mower set to cut as closely as possible.
- (2) Catch or rake up the clippings. They may contain seed heads.
- (3) Scarify the surface soil, especially the compact spots. Use a stout garden rake.
- (4) Feed generously with a good, complete grass food.
- (5) Seed liberally. Germination and seedling growth will be hastened if the lawn is kept moist.

There is only one conclusion reached unanimously by everyone who has any contact with Crabgrass and that is—it is a troublesome pest at best. Keeping a lawn well fed, well seeded and properly maintained is by far the best way to keep ahead of it.

How Have YOU Battled Crabgrass?

Among the more than 500,000 readers of LAWN CARE there may be



some discoverers of a new and better means of eliminating Crabgrass as a lawn pest. We shall welcome all such suggestions and pass them on to our readers. Many

new and better aids to good lawn maintenance have thus been put into practice.

From Milwaukee, Wisconsin:

A little detective work revealed one source of Crabgrass seeding as the alyssum border of my flower beds. Crabgrass was doing a nice job of seeding there, protected from detection by the white flowers, which evidently do not shade it enough to discourage it. This explains why my infestation of Crabgrass was so much worse near the flower beds.

From Tiskilwa, Illinois:

The way to get rid of Crabgrass is to encourage a thick growth of desirable grass in the fall after the Crabgrass is gone and in the spring and early summer before the Crabgrass gets a start.

From Lawrenceburg, Indiana:

My neighbor's yard to windward was crammed to overflowing with Crabgrass. Bare spots in my yard were an open sesame to wind-borne seeds, which were not slow in accepting the unintentional invitation offered.

Crabgrass was thwarting me in realizing a cherished project—an attractive lawn. Then flashed into my mind the words of one who wrote with authority: 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' This admonition is sound psychology I believe when applied to moral behavior. So my daily chant became:

"Be not overcome of Crabgrass
but overcome Crabgrass with good grass"

Passing the ammunition comprised working a complete fertilizer into the soil to a depth of several inches; in dissolving the fertilizer by thorough soaking of the ground. With

the terrain cleared and mined, the allied forces, Scotts Lawn Seed, were disposed thickly and pressed into service. After six weeks the turf became so well established that to regain lost territory Crabgrass is forced to fight for every inch of ground.

I consider the desirable grasses in my lawn as thoroughbred and as such they must be treated with the consideration shown thoroughbreds. If they are given the food and drink and grooming they demand, they will distance all scrubs like Crabgrass and its confederates. If they are deprived of a sufficient amount of the right kind of food and drink, they will fold up and surrender unconditionally to the infiltration of the common herd.

From Baltimore, Maryland:

I have just received your Lawn Care Bulletin No. 81. On page 4 you have a short article headed "Crabgrass Is Here." I believe you can make better lawns by another treatment. I have used this one with great success over a period of ten years. It never fails.

Set your lawn mower high at all times. The longer the lawn grass, the less chance of Crabgrass, but when the weather gets hot and dry, Crabgrass will grow and prosper. In this climate, about the first week in September Crabgrass will come into head. As soon as it is through heading, or nearly through, and before it actually begins to turn yellow, seed the Crabgrass infested area quite heavily with good lawn seed and hose it in. Do not rake the Crabgrass and do not cut it lower than usual. The quick germinating grasses in the mixture will come through to the top of the Crabgrass within ten days. By the time the Crabgrass turns yellow, the lawn grass seed will be well up, and will be mowed, so that when the green of the Crabgrass is gone the green of the lawn grass will take its place. The Crabgrass will act as a mulch, and promote the germination and growth of the lawn grass.

If the young seedlings are prevented from drying out, you will have an excellent stand of grass in thirty days which will, with proper fertilization, carry over into the next year when the Crabgrass arrives. This method will give a beautiful, green lawn every day in the year. There is no prettier lawn, under ordinary conditions in August, than Crabgrass. It is ugly only when it begins to turn yellow, and after it turns brown it is dead. You can get rid of all the difficulties of Crabgrass by this simple method.

Don't take my word fully for this. Try it as an experiment for a year or two to convince yourself.

According to one newspaper, the monster fire raids over Japanese cities all began with a homeowner who hated Crabgrass. A professor of chemistry at Harvard, while searching for a way to control Crabgrass in his yard, developed a substance that thickened gasoline into jelly. At the same time the Chemical Warfare Service called on him to develop a small incendiary that could be used to start camp fires with damp wood. His Crabgrass killer became the basis for the camp fire lighter and ultimately paved the way for the oil incendiary fire bomb.

Park Superintendent Reports on Crabgrass

M. N. Thomas, superintendent of Parks, St. Joseph, Missouri, reports on a successful seeding job after Crabgrass invasion in a dry summer:

"About the time fall seeding should be done there is always a luxuriant growth of Crabgrass which, if it has been mowed regularly, is not at all unsightly. If this grass is torn up to make a seed bed the public reaction is terrific. If seeding is delayed until the Crabgrass turns brown it is too late to insure a sturdy stand of grass before winter arrives.

"During the latter part of August the grass was mowed to a height of one inch and seed sowed immediately. The spring teeth of a roto-tiller were replaced with straight knives adjusted to a cutting depth of about three-fourths inch and the entire area tilled in both directions. The agitating action of the tiller thoroughly settled the seed in a well prepared bed beneath the surface of the sod. The area was then rolled

lightly and mowed again to remove the irregular tufts of grass lifted in the tilling process. In two or three days the lawn showed no evidence of having been disturbed. No growth was observed until the Crabgrass had been killed by frost. The young grass could then be observed in the tiller marks just as if it had been drilled.

"It is my opinion that the Crabgrass and accumulated clippings served to shade the young grass and to hold the moisture around the roots."

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FOR VETERANS

Several LAWN CARE readers have kindly sent in names of returned servicemen who are embarking upon a career as landscape contractors and nurserymen.

If you know of any veteran who will qualify for this service, we will be glad to send the complete LAWN CARE in the loose leaf binder and place his name on the subscription list, without charge or obligation.

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