

# Lawn Care

T.M. REG

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## WHERE WEEDS COME FROM

TO DISCUSS weeds properly, they need first to be defined. Probably the simplest definition is: "Any plant growing out of place." Thus a garden plant springing up in the lawn is a weed as is the finest kind of grass in a flower bed.

Dr. E. R. Spencer, author of an excellent book on weeds, says, "Of all the forms of nature, unless it be insects, nothing is so sure to come into one's life as weeds." Some folks feel that in this respect their lives have been full.

The illustration on this page exemplifies the spontaneity and longevity of weeds. The growth is all volunteer, covering a period of a few weeks. Nothing had been added to this good garden soil, which had been under intensive cultivation the previous year.

These volunteer weeds came from seeds in the soil. Obviously the seeds were over a year old. As a matter of fact some of them may have been deposited in the soil 25 or even 50 years. Agricultural research has proven seeds may live in the soil that long or longer. One common example is Crabgrass whose seeds have sprouted after lying dormant in the ground for as long as thirty years. Stirring of the soil brought these weed seeds to the surface where conditions of light, heat, moisture and air released them from their state of dormancy.

Frequent stirring up of the soil is nevertheless recommended procedure if there is time enough in preparation of a new lawn. The weed population can be reduced materially though not elimi-



Photo courtesy The Home Garden

nated completely by fallow cultivation. This means letting the weeds grow short of the seeding stage, then raking, harrowing or disking to kill them.

Even a full season of such treatment will not sprout and kill all weed seeds in the soil. Some seeds are endowed by nature with unusually hard coats that resist entrance of moisture for years. Others require alternate freezing and thawing to break the seed coat.

Farmers tell how certain weeds show up unexpectedly every twelve or fifteen years without rhyme or reason. The same thing has been noticed in turf areas. Even where the soil has not been disturbed, new weeds appear although such growth had been controlled in the lawn the previous year.

Sometimes weeds are introduced and at a high price. Manures, topsoil, native peats, black dirt—any of these will carry a substantial weed seed content just the same as any object will carry germs. Frequently the claim is made that these materials are weedfree because of screening, but this is not true because weed seeds are so tiny that they will slip through any screen that would pass soil particles.



It is possible to sterilize soil to kill weed seeds but it is seldom done because of the great expense involved in heating soil to temperatures of 200 degrees F. and keeping it there for at least a half hour.

There are chemical means of destroying the vitality of weed seeds but they are expensive and the residues may prevent growth of any seed.

Some weed seeds like dandelions and thistles are especially constructed for

airborne translocation. Others are carried from one place to another by birds. Still others are transported on shoes and clothing, a means greatly facilitated by the sticky or barbed surfaces which many seeds develop. Thus one weedy area can cause trouble in a whole neighborhood. Groupings of finest, clean lawns are apt to reflect a vigilant attitude on the part of homeowners in not permitting weeds in the neighborhood ever to develop to the stage of producing seeds.

Improperly cleaned grass seed is another source of weed infection.

Folks sometimes get a discouraging mess, such as shown in the illustration, after they have gone to a lot of trouble to prepare a seedbed, fertilize it and plant grass seed. They naturally wonder why weeds instead of grass.

Several things could have happened. The seed may have been covered more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in depth. This retards grass seed germination and gives the weeds a chance to get a head start and smother the young grass.

Or, the grass seed may have started but lost the battle because of competition for food and moisture. Sometimes the grass seed may germinate but the sprouts never see daylight. Fungus diseases such as "damping off" may blight them before they break through or shortly afterwards.

Many of these weeds which "take over" a new lawn, are described as annuals. These generally grow faster and more prolifically as they must mature a crop of seed in a very short time if the species is to survive. Such annuals have extensive spreading root systems, enabling them to get more than their share of moisture when the soil is dry. Others germinate in soil too cool for grass seed germination, while the weed plants themselves grow aggressively in cool, wet weather.

The more desirable grasses are perennial, slower to get started but longer lived. The contrast is not unlike the flower garden. Annuals develop fast and make a showing in a hurry while perennials start slowly and require extra months to reach maturity but each year bring satisfaction in beautiful foliage and flowers.

### We've Come of Age

E. H. Earle of Verona, New Jersey, writes that three generations of Earles are now using SCOTTS products. The father set the pace with a SCOTT lawn; his son at Bloomfield, New Jersey, followed suit, and now a grandson at Washington C. H., Ohio, is in the running. Nothing like setting a good example. . . . Speaking of age, we imagine the oldest LAWN CARE reader is still Mr. Robert M. Rownd, Civil War veteran living at Ripley, New York. On October 22, Mr. Rownd should be 105 if we've counted correctly. When he began to read LAWN CARE, Mr. Rownd was a mere boy of 85. . . . A Long Islander whose SCOTT lawn was the family pride and joy for 25 years, withstanding the romping feet of four children plus the neighborhood flock, laments that he and his wife have sold the home and moved to an apartment. BUT he says, "My SCOTT lawn sold the place." . . . A St. Louis widow found it necessary to dispose of her home with its two acre lawn which, she says, "was mighty hard to leave."

### It Worked

About two weeks ago, I applied your Lawn Food plus Weed Control. In three days the abundance of Plantain in the area looked sick. My sons, who mow the lawn, got quite a kick out of it. The Dandelions and creeping weeds were also killed. Meanwhile the grass, some of which was young, is looking fine.

DALLAS D. DUPRE, JR.  
Landscape Architect.

Columbus, Ohio

### SIRS:

Received the book of current issues of LAWN CARE plus the digest issues. I possess a collection of books on things that grow which cost me over \$150. Consider the book you sent me of more value to me than any one of the issues I have purchased, one of which cost \$20. Many thanks and I appreciate your co-operation.

IRVING E. CLARKE  
Rochester, N. Y. Nurseryman

## Early Steps in Fall Lawn Program



Admittedly the flesh is a bit weak for much lawn work while temperatures go into the nineties. Then, too, the nicest thing about a lawn is to be able to relax on it.

Should the spirit prevail to get a head start on the fall program, here are some suggestions:

**Crabgrass.** Rake, cross mow, catch the clippings, to reduce the number of ground-hugging seeding spikes that are setting the stage for next year's appearance. Hand pull if practicable, but it's quite a job in late summer after plants begin to joint and spread.

There are some new Crabgrass chemical controls. Some report success but it is safer to experiment in a small way before risking the whole lawn.

If your Crabgrass problem is really severe, refer to LAWN CARE Digest Chapter No. 9, also issues 95 and 96.

**Non-Grass Weeds**—Also called broad-leaved weeds though some are hardly that. The dicots (leafy weeds) as distinguished from monocots (grasses) are easily controlled chemically. Apply as spray or use spreader-applied Lawn Food plus Weed Control about two weeks before seeding.

**Feeding.** Use the Scott Spreader to put on a grassfood just before seeding. If a soil test has indicated need for lime, this may be put on at the same time, provided the raw ground limestone is used. Regular feeding is one of the greatest aids to better turf. If grass is dormant because of drouth,

that is a good time to feed as there is no danger of burning.

**Seeding.** The Spreader comes in handy here, too. It's all right to sow seed as the days get noticeably shorter, evening dews heavier, even though the ground is dry and weather hot. The seed will not germinate until moisture is adequate and is not harmed by being on early.

Tests have shown that good results can be expected from seedings any time in the fall or even into the winter. The earlier plantings give the grass a head start and the benefit of fall growing weather. This is usually excellent for young grass because warm soil, good moisture conditions, hot days and cool evenings all contribute to the sturdy root development of new grass.

Loosening the soil and working the seed into it is preferable but not always easy to do with a compact surface. Seeding of bare spots will be more productive if a light covering is put over the seed. Pulverized peat moss, compost or screened soil are satisfactory.

Whatever the covering, it should be one fourth inch deep or less. Quite a few seeding failures are attributable to a too-deep covering.

**Mowing.** As the weather gets cooler, it is advisable to set the mower down for closer cutting. This will give the young grass a better chance. It is also easier to remove leaves from a lawn cut fairly close (1 in. to 1½ in.)

**Watering.** If facilities are available, use them. Sprouting grass needs constant moisture at the surface so frequent sprinkling is important.

## Operators Still Find Profit in Pay Dirt

LAWN CARE, Better Business Bureaus and Experiment Stations notwithstanding, there are still quite a few operators of the humus or black dirt racket. As described in LAWN CARE No. 97, the system in brief is to load up a truck with muck, humus, black dirt or whatever can be had for the hauling. Then stop at a likely looking home, offer to spread the marvelous fertilizer full of vitamins and maybe even irradiation, over the lawn at so much per basket.

The price is high enough but the real trick is to claim to have put on many times over the actual application, settle for maybe half that, and collect a hundred dollars for a worthless—maybe harmful—addition to the lawn.

Here are a few more case histories:

**Eastern Shore of Maryland.** Truck with New Jersey license, three men offering "humus" as marvelous lawn treatment. Price \$1.50 per bushel or three cents per pound. Victim thought would cost \$25 or \$50. Men demanded and got \$630 for 420 baskets. Only women in household and they were afraid not to pay because of possible physical violence. Four other victims in this one small town.

**Philadelphia.** Three of these boys made the mistake of soliciting a police officer who had complaints the same day regarding three "fast talking, short weight" lawn fertilizer salesmen. Result—conviction for obtaining money under false pretenses. One to two years as guests of the city.

**Radburn, N. J.** Tea leaf topsoil peddled here but little sale because of timely warning by police department.

**Buffalo.** Not such good gleanings here, at least for two sets of operators. They were haled into court, forced to make restitution and pay substantial fines.

O M SCOTT & SONS CO.



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