

Lawn Care

PACIFIC STATES EDITION

ORIGIN OF LAWN SEED

This is the first West Coast edition of LAWN CARE. To nearly a million home owners in the East and Midwest this bulletin is an old and cherished friend, dropping in several times yearly to bring practical suggestions about the proper care of the lawn. We firmly believe that Western folks will just as highly prize this little publication. Feel free to tell others about it.

READERS of LAWN CARE frequently ask how and where lawn seed is grown, how it is harvested and prepared for market.

Grass is a subject of universal interest since it is so basic to life on this planet. Thousands of varieties of grass literally cover the world, but less than twenty-five are important in the turf program. Each continent has its own native or acclimated grasses. Scientists have combed the globe searching for new kinds suitable for North America.

A few of agricultural importance have been introduced but generally the better lawn grasses now in use are the ones well known in England and the continent before Colonial days.

There is romance in the study and observation of grasses. Aside from the fact that it is economically the most important of all vegetation, there is something wonderfully stimulating in the fresh color of a nice piece of turf. Perhaps it is because green is the vital color and grass more vitally green than anything else in the whole wide world.

All grasses start from seed yet strangely enough the different varieties produce seed in commercial quantities in only limited areas. The prime seed-

producing localities in the United States include Oregon and Washington, the great plains of Missouri and Kansas north into Canada. Some varieties are grown in central Illinois and in Kentucky.

New Zealand and Australia produce excellent quality seed of some varieties. Europe was of greater importance in grass seeds before the war but even now tiny Denmark is sending limited tonnages of *Poa Trivialis*, a seed produced in no other corner of the globe. Northern Germany, Sweden and the British Isles contribute some to the world seed supply.

Most grass seeds are harvested on pasture, or range lands from which grazing livestock is removed in the early spring to permit the grass to grow up naturally. It comes into bloom in the summer and, given favorable conditions, matures into seed heads not unlike ripening grain in appearance.

The weather at and following seed ripening time is critical. Warm weather with lots of sunshine is needed to properly mature the seed. The seed is gathered in several ways. One method is to "strip" off the seed heads by going over the fields with a machine equipped

with large reels having a sort of comb arrangement that pulls off the panicles and the spikelets carrying the seed.

Another method is to cut the standing grass, let it lie on the ground till dried and then machine-thresh like grain was separated before the advent of combines.

In Europe hand-gathering of the seed is still practiced, the whole family joining in the gathering and later processing of the green seed.

The weather after harvesting pretty much writes the ticket as to whether good yields will be realized and determines the quality potential of the seed. If it is wet and cool, drying out and curing will be slow and there may be considerable injury to the germ of the seed.

Next in order of seed preparation is a threshing to remove the actual seed from its protective covering. Here again expert handling is needed to avoid breaking or bruising the tiny individual seeds.

Now the seed is ready for the first actual cleaning operation because the threshing will have left in quantities of chaff, coarse seeds, weeds, sticks, sand and other dirt. This commercial cleaning is as much purifying as most seed receives. Some varieties will be only 80% pure and contain 3% weeds—enough to infest every square foot of seeded ground with several hundred weeds.

Years of experience and painstaking effort are required to know the localities having best growing conditions for the different grass varieties. These must be double checked each season as to crop growing and harvesting conditions. Finally the curing, threshing and country cleaning steps must receive careful follow-through supervision.

Even back in the 1870's O. M. Scott was known as a crank on the subject

SCOTT'S LAWN CARE

of weeds. He was interested in farming and rebelled at the sheer waste of sowing impure seeds containing weeds which, he said, would ultimately rob his crop and eventually ruin his fields.



He set about getting machinery to separate weeds from good seeds. He adapted and improvised his cleaning operation so well that soon his neighbors were asking him to clean their seed, eventually getting him started in the business that still bears his name.

Now, larger and more intricate machines take over the seed cleaning job. It is interesting to note how seed passes through one machine equipped with a series of vibrating screens. These remove some of the coarser chaff, sticks and the larger weed seeds. Meanwhile air jets are blown over the screens to lift out small pieces of chaff and light weight, poor germinating seed. Finally, by utilizing the principle of specific gravity, it is possible to clean the 80% seed so it is better than 99% pure, whole plump grains—ready for germination tests that assure growing ability.

The several varieties of grass must be cleaned individually and after cleaning they are subject to blending operations—this depending on the locality of planting and particular use to which the final turf is to be put. Then the seed must be properly stored to protect against loss of viability.

There are some interesting peculiarities about lawn seed. For one thing it does not germinate satisfactorily immediately after harvest. It is necessary for it to further age or cure to reach its full growing strength.

Another is that it must "breathe" in storage, at least until it is thoroughly dried and cured. Otherwise it may gen-

erate extreme heat and in so doing ruin the viability. Once thoroughly cured, extreme heat seems to have little effect on it.

Cold weather, even sub-zero, will not harm good seed.

If well-cured and aged seed is delivered to the consumer, he need have no particular concern about loss of germination in keeping it. It will hold its growing ability for several seasons—under ordinary storage conditions. A dry place is recommended, the garage or tool shed.

Not many commodities have such widespread use as grass seed. In a day's time shipments may go out for the benefit of a homeowner who may need only a pound. The same day a large contractor takes a carload to seed the middle parkway of the magnificent new highway from Portland, Maine, to Boston. A college in Oregon needs seed for its athletic field, a movie star wants it for his hide-away in the southern California hills. A factory wants to grass over a ten acre plant site. It's all in a day's work.

THE OREGONIAN, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1947

Seed Packages Sold for Lawn Use Found to Contain Poor Qualities

BY DON WOODMAN
Farm Editor, The Oregonian

Unsuspecting householders out shopping for lawn grass seed are in danger of a stinging when they look studying th-

The analysis labels show 85 and unloading the product per cent of the contents to be uninformed consumers, "rhye grass seed (a forage crop in emphasized. no way suited for lawns"

Courtesy of THE OREGONIAN, Portland, Ore.

This bold indictment headlined an account of a report by J. C. Moore, Assistant Marketing Specialist of Oregon State College to the Oregon Seed Growers' League. The article continues:

"Packages put out by two seed firms of national standing are being sold locally at 20c for an 8 ounce package labeled 'Lawn Mixtures' but actually containing no lawn grass seed recommended by growers or field technicians for planting in this state." Mr. Moore further stated that "too many dealers under price pressure are mixing pure seed with worthless or poorer kinds and unloading the product on uninformed consumers."

The use of unsuitable grasses such as instigated the Oregon warning will

produce a coarse, sparse growth, open to invasion by weeds. Suitable grasses on the other hand develop into a closely knit turf which resists weed encroachment.

Although there are thousands of different grasses, only a handful are suitable for lawn use. These are sturdy but fine in texture and sparkle with a bright spring shade of green. Most important of all is the lack of permanence in the resulting growth from a cheap lawn mixture. To have a lasting lawn one must obviously plant perennial grasses.

Credit is due the folks in Oregon for their efforts to raise the standards of lawn seed. Concerns specializing in the marketing of quality seeds have long realized that some of the best

varieties for lawns are produced on the Pacific Coast. They have made liberal use of such seed in their blends for western lawns, as well as for those in the mid-west and east. Surprisingly, the best lawn grass varieties for Portland or Seattle, San Francisco or Los Angeles, Tacoma or Sacramento are the same as for Chicago or Philadelphia or Boston and all points between.

Years ago LAWN CARE joined the Experiment Station crusade for good seed. From a scientific and an economic standpoint, impure seed is a poor buy and what is still more important, will not produce satisfactory lawns. Some years ago New York State released a bulletin showing that 48 of the 88 blends of grasses on sale in the state contained more than 1% weeds and some of them as many as 3% weeds. It is well to stop and reflect that 1% weeds can mean from 20,000 to 30,000 in each pound of seed. Average purity of all brands was only 80% and in practically all mixtures, temporary grasses predominated.

The average home owner cannot be fully informed about the selection of grasses, the permissible tolerance of inert and weed or foreign matter or know what constitutes a good buy, bearing in mind that a beautiful lawn is the one and only objective. He must place his confidence in a reputable source of supply and judge by the results received.

Those living in Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, Utah or Nevada will find Scotts famous Lawn Seed available in their localities. It may be slightly higher in price than nondescript seeds but there is justification in the quality contained in each package.

Lawn Care Digest Ready

This spring the one-hundredth issue of LAWN CARE will be published. Anticipating the rounding out of the first hundred, stock has been taken of changes in lawn procedures that have evolved since the first issue of twenty years ago.

Probably the most drastic one is the new development in chemistry making it easy to eliminate pesky weeds like dandelions, plantain, buckhorn, chickweed and the like. Folks who were formerly resigned to a yellow sea of blossoms of the hated dandelion every spring, now take heart and get rid of them with little more effort than a mowing of the lawn.

This new development has outmoded many of the earlier LAWN CARE bulletins. Accordingly, a revision is in progress—a digest of the best "Lawn Care" practices including rather detailed data on building new lawns.



The digest will carry ten or twelve chapters and will be available in paper bound style at 25c each, or loose leaf format with plenty of room for future issues at a dollar.

SIRS:

I surely am proud to say that I used your Lawn Food plus Weed Control. I only regret that I don't have more weeds to use it on. I surely wish you could see the dandelions disappear.

R. H. OSGOOD.

West Sacramento, Calif.

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