

Lawn Care

PUBLISHED FIVE TIMES YEARLY FOR LAWNTHUSIASTS

ORIGIN OF LAWN SEED

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 studying and observing 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 a few counties in central Illinois, the Great Plains of Missouri and Kansas, north into Canada. Some varieties are grown in the far west, particularly the coastal areas of Oregon and Washington.

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, in appearance not unlike ripening grain.

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 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.

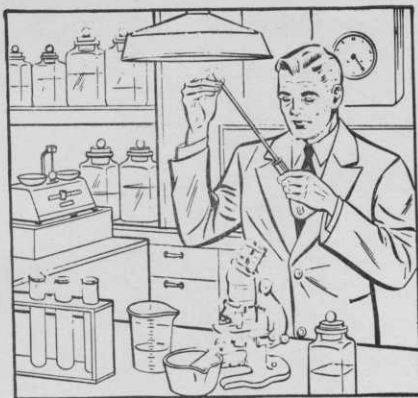


He set about getting machinery to separate weeds from good seeds. He adapted and improvised his cleaning operation so well that soon his neighbors were asking him to clean their seed, eventually getting him started in the business that still bears his name.

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 generate 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. In fact some experts don't like to plant seed unless it has gone through weather of this sort.

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.

SIRS:

One item which I have looked for in vain in LAWN CARE has been a method of edging a lawn along walks and concrete drive. In the past, I have attempted to maintain a small ditch but I have about concluded that it is not a good thing. It seems to be a good place for weed seeds to catch. It has been impossible to secure regular and competent assistance in caring for my lawn so that it is difficult to maintain the little ditch properly. Possibly other readers of LAWN CARE have found the answer. If so, could their suggestions be written up?

RALPH E. SMILEY, M.D.

Mason City, Iowa.

Who can help the busy doctor?

SIRS:

Reference—killing ants: Cyanogas is the boss medicine, but I can't see the point of prying into the ant-hole with a screw driver or a stick. In my experience that tends to choke the hole with dirt. Try this method: Required: a can of Cyanogas that comes equipped with a spout, and some metal caps from chili sauce and catsup bottles.

Process: wait until dark, when all or most of the ants are in the nest. Pour some Cyanogas into the hole. Cover hole with the metal cap. Phone a minister to be on hand in the morning to conduct services. The ants will be with their honorable ancestors.

ED WOLFF.

Rochester, New York.

SIRS:

Application of your 4-X last year was all that kept our large yard from becoming a jungle. My husband was in the hospital in the spring, and I took my turn in July. With the help of two little neighbor boys, I sprinkled the entire yard and through my convalescence enjoyed my neighbors' exclamations of amazement at the unbelievable control exercised by your servant 4-X.

MRS. EDNA FOGARTY.

Chicago, Ill.

SIRS:

One of the black-dirt bandit crews worked this area the other day but my lawn and pocketbook were protected (in my absence) by one of the family who had read LAWN CARE 97. Thanks.

ARTHUR VAN VLISSINGEN.

Lake Bluff, Illinois.

New Spreader Booklet Available

It is not difficult to get good service out of a Scott Spreader but there are some hints that will pay off in better results. A guide booklet is now furnished with these spreaders. As the season for their use is near, we quote here a chapter from the booklet.

SPREADING THE LAWN

Plan to operate spreader in the direction of the longer dimension of the lawn.

First apply two swaths across the shorter sides to provide room for turning around at the end of each of the long strips.

Then go back and forth from header to header until entire area is treated. When approaching these end zones shut off spreader in order not to make double application.

Next do the irregular areas, being careful to shut off spreader in backing and turning. Adjust to a leaner setting in cut-up areas.

If there are trees or shrubs in the lawn, shut off the spreader as it is pushed around them—otherwise the perimeter may be treated two or three times. Use care in treating slopes and terraces for the same reason. Follow a regular pattern so double doses are avoided.

In high wind cover hopper with cardboard, burlap sack or heavy paper.

Excessive application is harmful whether seeding, feeding or applying weed control. It definitely is not true that if "one pound is good, two pounds are better."

While not made for that purpose, the Scott Spreader can be used to apply some types of raw ground agricultural limestone.

The spreader should be set at mark 18 and unless the lime packs too badly in the hopper, it will be applied at 15 to 20 pounds per 1000 square feet. If more is required, a second application may be made, preferably at right angles to the first.

Lime is corrosive so it is doubly important to wash and oil the spreader after using.

A copy of the Spreader Care booklet will be sent to anyone upon request.

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 forms at a dollar. If you would like one, please use the coupon form:

Please send the new **LAWN CARE Digest**.
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