

# Lawn Care

PACIFIC STATES EDITION

REG U S PAT OFF

## WESTERN LAWNS PROGRAM

**G**ETTING a lawn off to a good start has a tremendous influence on its behavior in later life. Without proper "upbringing" it can easily develop into a problem child that ceases to be the intended source of pride and pleasure.

Thousands of new lawns will be constructed in the west this year as new homes near completion. A few will grow to become the envy of their neighborhoods but many will remain mediocre simply because they started on the wrong foot and a few basic principles of turf culture were violated.

First take a glance ahead and bear in mind that the approaching season is one that is generally short on natural moisture. In many areas it is also a season of high temperatures, often above the limit tolerated by desirable lawn grasses. In these areas particularly, subtropical grasses like Bermuda

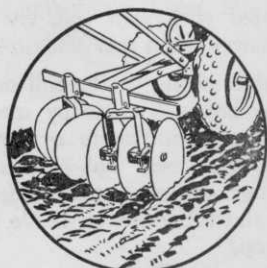
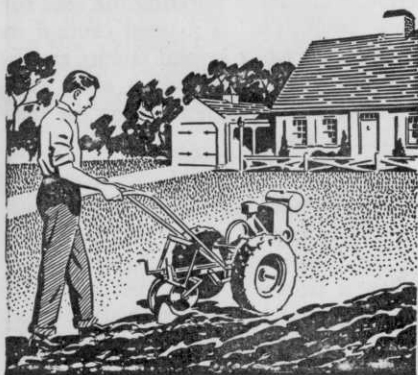
have their inning in the summertime and quickly liquidate weakling grasses.

The objective in new lawn building, then, should be to get the new grass as solidly established as possible—well anchored and hardened—before it must contend with adverse conditions. The more time allowed, the better will this be accomplished and that is one reason for getting an early start.

It takes time for grass roots to grow deep. Deep rooting is desirable to lessen the danger of damage from later moisture shortage. Under most conditions soil dries out first from the surface and shallow roots in the surface layer may be injured before the lack of water becomes obvious.

Damaged spots in a lawn are weak and they are an open door to weeds.

It is true that grass can be planted any time of year. Lawns have been successfully seeded on a blanket of snow or during midsummer droughts. But



Garden tractors with plow and disc attachments are useful in lawn soil preparation.



**Scott Spreaders insure easy and even application of seed and lawn food. They can be bought or rented.**

these are not the times to choose if you have a voice in the matter. You are more apt to have an optimum soil moisture if you plant in early spring.

### **TILLABLE SOIL**

Sandy soil can be worked much earlier than heavy soils. Adobe should not be worked when saturated with water. Under those conditions the minute particles which make up its mass adhere in clods which bake hard as rock. On the other hand, if allowed to dry too thoroughly before working, it is just as hard and is capable of snapping even the steel teeth of power driven cultivators.

Between these two extremes there is a period when the seed bed can be prepared with a minimum of effort. Get acquainted with your soil, try it out and discover when this best time is.

Initial breaking of the soil on average size lawns is done by means of small power cultivators or by hand spading. Whatever tool is used, care should be taken not to turn under good topsoil and bring less desirable subsoil to the top.

Except on sandy soils this step leaves the ground in a lumpy condition and

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further fining is necessary before it is ready to receive the seed. A heavy hoe and garden type rake or garden cultivator are needed to adequately pulverize the top two inches.

Dragging a plank or flexible steel door mat over the ground will help to level it and break up the lumps.

### **PROVIDE NOURISHMENT**

During this final preparation of the seed bed is the time to stock the soil with food to nourish the new grass as it begins growth. Distribute the lawn food on the surface, then rake it lightly into the top inch or so.

It is important to distribute fertilizer evenly so that growth will be as uniform as possible, and it is wasteful to put it on heavier than necessary.

This is one place where a well designed spreader is a time and labor saver. By adjusting the spreader at the proper mark the fertilizer will be deposited evenly and at the recommended rate. A spreader engineered for both feeding and seeding can also be used for sowing seed to equal advantage. Spreaders can be bought or rented at many garden supply stores.

### **SOWING THE SEED**

Much has been written about the exercise of care in selecting the seed for your lawn. This is a good caution to observe for while several factors are involved in the construction of a good lawn, it will be no better than the seed which is sown.

As pointed out in LAWN CARE 98, few folks have the time to keep thoroughly informed on all the intricacies of seed formulations. But they can select a trustworthy source of supply and seed that has won its laurels. Buying on the basis of price alone is likely to procure a lawn of annual grasses

instead of the more costly perennial grasses. After all, the seed is the smallest investment in a lawn and is no place to pinch pennies. Actually good seed goes enough farther in sowing to make it cost less in the end.

Using a good quality seed, free from bulky chaff, four to six pounds on each 1000 square feet is ample. It is best sown with a spreader, though hand seeding is satisfactory if done carefully.

Especially where hand broadcasting is done, it is advisable to divide the seed in two equal parts. Then sow the second half in a direction at right angles to the first half. This lessens the chance of any spots being missed.

### TUCK SEED IN

The food and moisture bearing soil should be on all sides of the seed. To accomplish this, bury the seed by a very light raking—just a scratching. Too heavy raking will re-distribute the seed unevenly and may cover it so deeply that germination will be retarded. Properly done, some of the seed will still be visible on top of the ground.

Though not generally practiced, a light rolling after seeding is well worth the trouble. It firms the soil in contact with the seed so the first tiny root sent out immediately comes in contact with both food and moisture. An empty water ballast roller is best but in most neighborhoods these are scarce items. On small areas a board or light weight tamper can be substituted. Lawns planted in previous years and already established should get their introduction to early spring by a thorough raking.

### ESTABLISHED LAWNS

A stiff-tooth garden rake, rather than a flexible leaf rake is needed

to penetrate the vegetation and reach the ground surface. This raking removes leaf pieces, grass clippings, and a surprising amount of other undecayed debris that harbors the spores of various turf diseases.

It also reveals thin and weak spots in the lawn that should by all means receive seed for reinforcement.

It opens the turf and aerates it, also scarifies the soil surface to receive the re-inforcing seed.

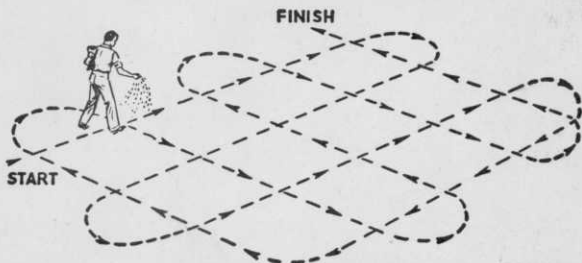
By adjusting the wooden roller of the mower upward or downward, regulate the height of cut to about one inch. This is the distance between the sidewalk and the edge of the bedknife.

This is ordinarily too short to cut lawns and should not be practiced during the hot, dry months. It is, however, desirable for the spring renovation.

### OLD GRASS IS HUNGRY, TOO

After the mowing, give the grass a feeding. Turf must have food to grow on. This is a primary axiom of good lawn culture. Even a fertile soil can be deficient in the nutrients needed for such intense farming as is practiced in the maintaining of a home lawn.

The spring feeding does double duty. (1) it gives new color and vigor to established grass plants. Winter rains have leached many nutrients out of the soil. Winter growth has consumed additional quantities. These must be re-



Hand seeding in two directions to insure even coverage

placed. (2) It provides a ready supply of nourishment for infant grass.

Just any old fertilizer will not do. Some are prepared for use in gardens where the development of vegetables is the goal. Others are prepared for use in flower gardens or on certain shrubs where blooms are the desired objective. Special foods for lawns are designed to produce healthy green grass of sparkling green color and such should be used in your lawn maintenance.

Feeding lawns regularly, at least three times a year, is an easy bit of care which cures many ills and pays big dividends in lawn beauty.

### OVERSEEDING

It is much easier to keep a good lawn looking good than to let it run down and then build it back up periodically. This is a strong argument for putting your lawn on a program of regular feeding and seeding.

Re-seeding requires only a small amount of good seed and early spring is the time to sow it. Use only 2 or 3 pounds on each 1000 square feet.

This replaces the normal expectancy of plant casualties resulting from disease and insects and reduces the possibilities of vulnerable thin or bare spots. It retards the inroads of Devil Grass and other weeds and very definitely postpones the necessity of rebuilding.

The only way to expect a permanent lawn is to sow perennial grasses. It is not uncommon to find mixtures containing 50% or more of annual grasses that won't last, no matter how carefully they are nursed. Annual grasses are sometimes used in mixtures because

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they are low in cost and enable mixing to meet a price instead of meeting the requirements of beautiful, lasting turf.

There is no use buying weeds with your grass seed, either. Weeds are expensive even when given away and there is no point in paying for the privilege of sowing more.

### SIRS:

I have a Scotts lawn in front of my home and I agree with my neighbors that it is the most beautiful on the block.

HARRY HARLICK

Redwood City, Calif.

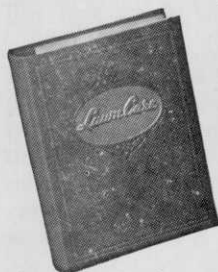
## Lawn Know-How

LAWN CARE is a free bulletin service that western lawn enthusiasts are finding a trustworthy friend and wise counselor on matters pertaining to lawn making and maintenance. Delivered to your home several times yearly, it brings you timely hints and new ideas on what to do for your lawn. As one

reader expressed it, "LAWN CARE has been worth its weight in gold to us. Thank you, and please keep it coming our way."

An up-to-date digest of information previously appearing in LAWN CARE bulletins is available in paper binding for 25c, or in a green leather style ring binder for only \$1.00.

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