

# Lawn Care

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## CLOVER IN LAWNS—*Friend or Enemy*



The growth of clover is an interesting phenomenon of nature. Farmers know that some years it grows more abundantly than others.

For reasons hard to explain it may disappear in some years and reappear later without reseeding.

About the same situation exists in the type of clover found in many lawns. Sometimes this clover is seeded by the owner, but often it is strictly volunteer. Its source seems a mystery. The explanation is that some clover seeds have an extremely hard, impermeable seed coat. Such seeds may resist germination or decay for 25 or even 50 years.

Even in a closely cut lawn, clover is apt to bloom and produce seeds. These fall to the ground and some eventually start new plants to continue the cycle.

Advantages of clover in a lawn lie in its prolific top growth and extensive root system. It is somewhat more drouth resistant than grasses so it usually stays green longer. As there is some spreading, almost vining growth close to the ground, clover may help the lawn present more of a green cover right after mowing. Even if the plant dies the roots add valuable humus to the soil. Clover takes nitrogen from the air but little more than is needed for its own growth.

One disadvantage of clover is that it is not a grass so its vegetation is of a different texture. Another is that most lawn lovers object to the white blossoms in mid-summer. Actually this is no longer a valid objection. Some of the newer controls for broad-leaved weeds are formulated so they do not



Clover blossoming controlled by one June application of weed control.  
Scotts Lawn Research photo.

permanently injure clover plants. They simply inhibit the blossoming tendency, thus eliminating one objection to clover.

If desired, weed controls may be used to practically eliminate clover. This requires applications at 3 to 4 week intervals through the summer and early fall. One or two treatments per year will have no effect except to reduce blossoming.

Where it is desired to bolster a lawn with clover it is suggested that the seed be sown separately and lightly in late winter or in the spring. Fall seedings are risky because of winterkill. In fact, another objection voiced against clover is that it may kill badly in severe winters, leaving ugly patches to be repaired in the spring.

Some theories have been advanced that lime or fertilizers, used independently or together, may have some bearing on clover prevalence in turf. There seems little basis for such contention. If a lawn needs lime, it should be applied and regular feeding is a necessity on all lawns.

#### SIRS:

I used a package of Scotts Lawn Food plus Weed Control and the results were marvelous. One of my neighbors sent for a trial order and I helped him apply the material and again with satisfactory results. So Scotts fame is spreading in this neighborhood.  
Cornell, Wis.

ANDY BORK.

## Crabgrass Next

In LAWN CARE No. 102, readers were asked to report on their experiences with the new chemicals on Crabgrass.

Replies poured in, a wonderful response. This gave good evidence that LAWN CARE readers are anxious to exchange helpful information.

The next issue will report the survey. Readers will have it in time to plan this year's action against Crabgrass.



## INSECT CONTROL NOW EASIER

Fortunately lawns escape the ravages of most of the insects and diseases of the flower and vegetable garden. Grass enemies are relatively few compared to the beetles and aphids, mealy bugs and lady bugs, potato bugs and corn borers, mildew and rust that force the gardener to give weekly or daily therapy to his prized roses or tomatoes.

In many sections of the country, insect and animal pests harm lawns not at all. Even in infested areas, most lawns escape especially if they are on reasonably good soil and receive proper preventive maintenance. One such step is to guard against Beetle Grub damage by having the toxic agent in the soil before grub activity begins.

Prior to the development of DDT and successor chemicals such as Chlordane, Toxaphene, Benzene Hexachloride, Thiophos, the job of controlling pests in grass was extremely obnoxious, to say the least. This generally involved working with poisonous substances, laboriously mixing and applying sprays or choking dusts. Apprehension followed lest a member of the family or a pet be sickened by one of the toxic ingredients. Some treatments had added hazards of explosion and fire.

While many of the new insecticides are relatively harmless to warm-blooded animals, they still have to be applied as sprays or dusts. This is quite a job and



if there is much wind, the material may settle on the neighbor's property or even on the wife's white wash.

Most objections to lawn insecticide use have been overcome in a convenient Scott preparation called Pest Control. The newer chemicals are blended into dry carrier materials so the application is easily made with a spreader—even in a fairly brisk wind. This dry compound provides control of most insects harmful to lawns.

The standard dosage of Scotts Pest Control is 5 lbs. per 1000 sq ft., and this amount is adequate for almost any infestation which the product is a specific control. While Pest Control does not hurt or even shock grass, there is no point in using it unless insect trouble is present or suspected.

No attempt is made here to describe the various pests or the way they injure grass. The reader is referred to earlier issues or to the *LAWN CARE Digests*.

**ANTS.** There are as many different kinds of ants as breeds of dogs, but whether *Lasius niger* or the common picnic variety, they damage grass only indirectly (*LAWN CARE Digest* Chapter 11). Their mounds or burrows are unsightly, interfere with mowing, and may smother young grass plants. They become real pests if they move from the lawn into the garden or even the house.

Ant activity starts in early spring as soon as the soil warms, usually on first-warmed terraces or slopes facing west or south.

Ants are special pests in the garden because their intricate tunnelling permits excessive evaporation from the soil. This may result in fatal drying of the roots of valuable plants. A more serious indictment of ants is that they foster objectionable aphids. They carry the eggs underground in winter and actually transport young and adult aphids to "host" plants during the growing season.

It is not easy to eliminate ants. While no one control will get rid of them under all circumstances, the combination of materials in Pest Control has been found effective and easy to use.

The best treatment is a broadcast application over the infested lawn area. A small amount of material may be placed in each hill or mound but this is quite a job if there are any number of them.

Pest Control may be applied any time ants are bothersome, and repeated safely as occasion requires. This is not likely to be more than once or twice a season.

**BEETLE GRUBS.** There are many kinds of beetles but only a few lay their eggs in sod. Of these the most common are Japanese, Asiatic and May beetles. Their eggs hatch into larvae or grubs that feed on grass roots, eventually killing large patches of turf. (*LAWN CARE* Chapter 11.)

Jap and Asiatic grubs are to be found in the East from southern Maine to Georgia, west to the Alleghenies. Scattered infestations occur around Cleveland, Columbus, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, St. Louis and Chicago. Activity of the May beetle or June grub occurs mostly in the Middle West.

Since beetle grubs feed through the growing season, control may be applied almost any time, even when the ground is frozen. Except where the compound is worked into cultivated soil, to grub-proof before seeding, any grubs already present in the soil will not be affected until the material works down to where they are feeding. This may take several weeks depending upon the soil type and weather.

**CHINCH BUGS.** Fortunately chinch bugs are turf pests in only limited areas along the East Coast from Boston to Miami. Occasional infestations occur around Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Chicago.

This tiny insect, described in detail in *DIGEST* CHAPTER 10, is one of the most difficult of pests.

Controls for chinch bugs must be applied during or a few days before they start feeding on grass plants by sucking the juices. This takes place only in warm, dry weather. As the effectiveness depends upon the Pest Control being on the plants or at least at the surface of the soil, application is made about the time the first infestation is expected in May or June. Repeat treatments may be needed at four or five week intervals if chinch bug activity continues.

**SOD WEBWORMS.** On the West Coast these pests are better known as Lawn Moths. A similar pest is called Skippers. The moths are small, having a wing spread of one inch or less, white to yellowish-tan in color. Insects of this type lay eggs in the grass and these hatch into grass-eating larvae. (*LAWN CARE Digest* Chapter 10.) Except on the West Coast, webworms are not a serious lawn problem. They may be bothersome in other parts of the country if the weather in late spring and early summer is unusually dry.

This pest also feeds above the surface. Preventive treatments are not prescribed until

there is good evidence of activity. This would be when a large number of moths are observed flying over the grass, especially in the evening or when birds are unusually active in tearing up the grass. A treatment with Pest Control should last at least four weeks or possibly the full season.

**ARMY WORMS, CUTWORMS** do little direct damage to turf. If they are present in such numbers as to attract unwanted birds, they may be substantially reduced by a standard Pest Control treatment.

**CHIGGERS.** There is good news for those who like to lounge on their lawns but hesitate to do so because of chiggers. Fortunately occasional applications of Pest Control spell doom to this nymphal mite.

**MOLE CRICKETS** are pests in lawns and putting greens of the deep South. They are difficult to kill so a double dose is recommended.

**EARTHWORMS** also called Fish-, Dew-, Angle-worms and Night Crawlers. For all he is a lowly creature, there is no question but that the earthworm has been and will continue to be important in soil fertility, yet scientists say there is no justification for the cults, societies and commercial hullabaloo about propagation and preservation of earthworms—hybrids or the common garden variety.

In spite of the faddists, earthworm activity can be curtailed in lawns without dooming the world population. The question is how. The claim has been made that fertilizer harms earthworms but that theory has been exploded. Arsenate of Lead at 10 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. seems to reduce earthworm numbers but most folks dislike to use this poison on their lawns.

Some report good success with Pest Control at double rates. Results have been erratic so applications are suggested on a trial basis.

**Moles, Skunks, Raccoons** and other burrowing animals often damage lawns but not because of their fondness for grass. They are after the juicy grubs or worms buried under the sod and they don't replace the divots! If any of these four-legged animals are at work, or if birds tear up the sod, the grass area needs a treatment to destroy whatever insect or larva is attracting them.

SIRS:

Now . . . I've used a spreader as you suggest on Page 4 of **LAWN CARE** No. 98 but under paragraph 6, wind or no wind, I merely put a bag or two of fertilizer on the spreader, slitting the under side lengthwise of each bag, and start off with it. Saves handling and certainly prevents any blowing. Material runs out of the bag into the spreader as I walk.

L. DODGE, Head Gardener,  
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## Chickweed, Wild Onions Are Tough to Kill

Most broad-leaved weeds succumb readily to the new weed controls. Others are resistant at certain seasons.

Chickweed is a vigorous grower in cool, moist weather. At such times, weed control has little effect so applications are better made in early summer or early fall. Repeat treatments are apt to be required. Some plants will escape and Chickweed is such a prolific seeder that seeds in the soil will continue to send up new plants.

About the same difficulty exists in trying to rid lawns of other low-growing, vining weeds such as Speedwell, Heal All and Black Medic (Trefoil).

Wild Garlic or Wild Onion is more vulnerable in late winter or early spring just as they get off to a good start in the new season. A double strength treatment is recommended (this is safe in cool weather) because of the natural resistance of these bulbous weeds. Wild Garlic or Wild Onion cannot be eliminated in one year because not all bulb-lets will germinate in any one season.