

Lawn Care

T.M. REG

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SUMMER LAWN REPORT

“**M**ORE grass plants die prematurely from lack of water than from any other cause,” according to Dr. T. T. Kozlowski of the Department of Botany, University of Massachusetts. This statement was made during the 1949 Turf Conference at Amherst, one of the most important centers of turf research in the country.

Spring and summer of 1949 have provided just about every possible extreme of moisture and growing conditions. In most sections, April stayed cold and dry—with little germination of any kind of seed whether on the lawn or in the flower bed.

Early May weather is only described by that banal term “unusual.” The Chicago Weather Bureau records provide data. They reported May as warmer, sunnier and drier than normal. Record high temperatures—91 to 94—were set in the first week. In contrast the last week of May saw a record low of 39 degrees.

In between, the weather was mostly sunny and windy—causing quick and complete drying of the surface. Rain-fall during the month was two thirds of normal and most of that fell on one day in the middle of the month. Precipitation in the beginning and at the end of the month was too little to support germination and seedling growth.

Average June temperatures were the highest on record in many sections, exceeding normal for July, usually the



hottest of the year. Again in June most of the month's rain fell in a period of three or four days right in the middle of the month. Humidity was high through most of the month, causing an unusual amount of fungus diseases attacking grass and flowers.

The exception to June conditions was provided in the East and New England. They had the heat and humidity but without the rain. A serious drouth extended well into July.

Established grass tolerates spring drought but it can be disastrous to seedlings. The small grass seed, often lying on top of the ground, is exposed directly to the hot sun and drying winds. Maybe it absorbs enough moisture for germination from its slight

contact with the soil. As the tiny sprout emerges, it tries to make contact with the soil to supply the plant with a constant flow of water. Failing to do so it succumbs because water is its life blood.

Good seed is not injured if warmth and moisture are lacking so the seed does not swell and break the seed coat. The trouble comes from the fact that somehow the seed will get enough moisture for germination—but not enough to keep the seedling alive. At this stage a few hours' drying will prove fatal to uncovered sprouts sending out hair roots in search of life-giving moisture. Casual observation would lead one to believe the seed never germinated because green blades did not emerge.

Examination of many areas this summer disclosed dried seedlings with the hulls still attached. The sprouts had emerged but moisture just was not there to sustain growth.

Realization of the importance of moisture should encourage greater care in seeding. It should at least provide an understanding of why turf may not be established if unfavorable weather follows seeding, and watering, if any, is carelessly carried out.

Here are some of the reasons why seedlings on newly prepared soil may succumb in a dry season:

1. Loose soil condition following a fill and not sufficient time for settling.

2. Layering of "black dirt," or other poor fill that is nothing but worn out muck. (Get a reliable soil test before investing.)

3. Top soil not having good contact with the underlying soil so capillary moisture cannot be effective.

4. Raking or covering the seed so deeply that it does not get needed air and light for germination. A bare covering is right, $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.

5. Failure to water often enough to keep the surface constantly moist until the grass is well rooted.

Many folks have difficulty in getting grass started in bare or thin areas of established lawns. Such failures are mainly due to merely scattering seed on top of the ground. There it is easy prey to birds, winds and washing, driving rainfall, or if it escapes these fates, the seedlings die for want of moisture. A little care in reseeding bare spots brings better results. Here are some suggestions:



1. Loosen and fine the soil crust by lightly chopping it with a flat garden spade, axe or spike tamp. Other good implements include the half moon turf edger or a flat walk scraper.

2. Topdress with good soil. This may follow seeding, if no more than a quarter-inch is used. If a heavier covering, seed after soil is spread and then rake seed into loose soil and firm by tamping and rolling.

3. In any event, apply lawn food before sowing seed. Try to keep surface moist after seeding until the grass is well rooted.

Fertilizers

Help Earthworms

U. S. Department of Agriculture Research at Beltsville, Maryland, has recently reported on further tests with earthworms. In summary they advise that earthworms thrive and do a better soil building job in well fertilized soil.

Their tests show that worms are more effective where fertilizer is used

and that more benefit is obtained from fertilizer when earthworms are present.

A hint to gardeners is given in the fact that earthworms did more good, crop-wise, where the ground was covered with a winter mulch. This protected the earthworm population against sudden temperature drops. It kept the soil more moist and enabled the earthworms and fertilizer to work together for top results.

Nature's Tip—Fall Seeding

The best lawn fixup time is the period from mid-August into October, depending upon the weather. This is the season when Mother Nature co-operates to provide better growing conditions for young grass plants, making it especially advantageous for new lawns or others needing extensive seeding.



It's well to get started early. Extreme heat, even drouth will not harm seed which has not germinated. Because of this, the recommendation is to proceed in the late summer with new lawn preparation or renovation even though the weather is still hot. Get the work done so that as the fall rains come and nights get longer and cooler, young grass will have the advantage of these favorable conditions.

For more detailed suggestions, the reader is referred to LAWN CARE issues 101 and 102 as well as Digest Chapters One through Four.

SIRS:

We have two acres of asparagus which was infested with morning glory vine. We thought we would lose the asparagus, but after experimenting with different weed killers, we found Scotts 4-X killed the vine without hurting the asparagus.

Sherman, Illinois.

JOE MELICHAR.

Soil Test Service

Soil and sod examination and analysis service is available at Scott laboratories. A report is provided describing the physical classification, the need for lime and the best cultural practices. Insects, weeds, and wild grasses in the samples will be identified.

The maximum charge is one dollar for first sample and 50 cents for each additional sample submitted at the same time.

HOW TO TAKE SAMPLES

Established Turf—Cut actual plugs of sod from the lawn, using a trowel or flat spade. Have them at least 4 inches square and 5 or 6 inches deep. Wrap firmly in waxed paper so plug reaches laboratory as nearly as possible like it was taken from the ground.

Loose Materials—About a pint of bulk is required. The sample of soil or humus should be representative of the whole. Take materials from various locations and mix together to make a composite sample. Do not mix soils that are conspicuously different. Instead send each type separately.

Mailing Samples—Advise by letter the number of samples being sent, stating the lawn problem or question. If soil is from an established lawn, describe past experience in as much detail as possible. Do not enclose letter inside package as that would subject the entire shipment to first class postage. Instead:

1. Put letter in envelope properly addressed, carrying letter postage, and paste to outside of package.
2. Place return address on package as well as the address of the laboratory. Affix stamps to package at parcel post rates.

TWO LAB LOCATIONS

O. M. SCOTT & SONS CO.
1086 North Broadway
Yonkers 3, New York

O. M. SCOTT & SONS CO.
Marysville, Ohio

Samples originating east of Ohio and Kentucky should be sent to the Yonkers address. Otherwise forward to Marysville except where Jap Beetle quarantine is in effect.

DO NOT SEND REMITTANCE with sample. A bill for the service will be rendered with the report.

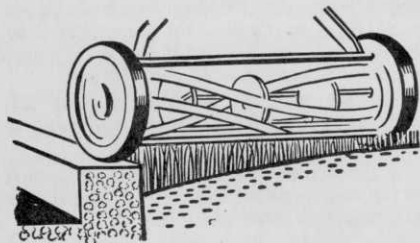
Don't Mix Seed and Fertilizer

Many LAWN CARE readers ask if it is all right to mix seed and fertilizer together so as to apply both in one operation. In general the answer is "No." There is a chance of harming the seed, especially if the combination is stored for any length of time.

One argument advanced is that time is saved by mixing the two materials and applying them as one spreader operation. This is rather imaginary. The separate jobs of seeding and feeding are done so quickly with a good spreader that the mixing would take as much time as saved in spreading. Besides, mixing is a dusty operation. Many would not get an even mix of seed and fertilizer and end up with spotty results.

More on Edging

Faced with miles of edging along the curbs and walks of the Federal District Commission, we are treating it this way. We roll back the sod for a couple of feet from the edge of a walk and scrape out about 2 inches of soil.



Then we relay the sod. After that it is only necessary to cut with one wheel of the mower on the walk. The grass can't spread sideways.

EDWARD I. WOOD
Ottawa, Ontario. Landscape Architect.

An excellent suggestion from one of many Canadian readers.

If You Want to Keep Up on Lawns

Send for a full set of these LAWN CARE bulletins. They're chock-full of timely hints and new ideas on lawn making and maintenance. Available in a neat green ring binder for \$1 or in a heavy paper binder for only 25c. At your Scott dealer or address LAWN CARE, Marysville, Ohio.

SIRS:

I have found my Scotts Spreader ideal for spreading Calcium Chloride on my icy pavements and driveway. With the spreader set for wide open, it scatters these crystals evenly and more effectively than is possible by hand.

W. A. AMELUNG.

Waterbury, Conn.

Calcium Chloride is also applied for dust control. The Spreader should be thoroughly washed and dried immediately after using a corrosive material of this kind.

SIRS:

I had the problem of seeding a bare slope on my lawn. The soil was hard and barren. I dug out the surface soil and replaced it with good garden soil. To prevent washing, I took old plaster lath and drove these edgewise into the loose soil until the top edge was practically flush with the soil. I set them in parallel rows and flush so I could mow over them. I used your lawn grass seed freely and got a fine stand of grass. The following season when the ground had become firm, I removed the lath and the depression filled readily.

H. C. DOLLINSON.

Madison, Wisc.

O M SCOTT & SONS CO.



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