

Lawn Care

| MARCH 1950 | | | | | | |
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To help you sow a fine scene of sparkling green



Kentucky Bluegrass -- Pioneer Extraordinary

HISTORY AND SCIENCE seem to concur that Kentucky bluegrass is native to northern Europe and cooler parts of Asia. Today it grows throughout temperate North America, and its empire includes Mexico, South Africa, Australia, and many far-flung lands. It was scientifically named *Poa pratensis*, *Poa of the meadow*, in Sweden, but even the Greeks had a word for it — the *poa* of Eubulus or the *poa* of later Greeks. This *Poa* of the meadow was familiar in the pastures of Europe long before discovery of the New World.

How did *Poa pratensis*, lawn-grass-to-be, get to the New World — to spread so widely and achieve renown as Kentucky Bluegrass? No one really knows, but probably it was just a chance passenger on the early ships bringing colonists and supplies to the newly discovered lands of the West. Of these first landings in eastern America there is much of derring-do, but again no thought of record for an ordinary pasture grass. Who would send Sir Walter Raleigh a prosaic report on stockfeed, rather than the

romance of a new continent beset with "savages" and treasure?

Yet, *Capt. Barlowe*, reporting to Raleigh on discovering Virginia in 1584, mentions trial planting to test the soil. Even then might bluegrass have been introduced — as weed seed in the crop, or in old shipboard straw thrown out upon the land. In 1586 the governor of Sir Richard Grenville's colony in Virginia reported to Raleigh: "— we had sown enough grain fields to give us food for a year." Certainly bluegrass might have been among these small grains, especially in a day of hand threshing and careless winnowing. Perhaps already was it working westward to its destiny in Kentucky?

Migration of this pioneer grass could proceed with giant strides only as colonization felled the forest and turned the land. Grasses don't flourish in the heavy forest, and except for infrequent Indian clearings all eastern North America was a solid blanket of forest at the time of Raleigh. But by 1620 the inexorable nibblings at the seemingly limitless forests were well

under way. *Capt. John Smith* reports: "James Towne is yet their chiefe seat most of the wood destroyed, little corne there planted, but all converted into pasture and gardens; wherein doth grow all manner of herbs and roots we have in England in abundance and as good grasse as can be—." *William Penn, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin* and the few New World botanists of the day, all noted in their writings the ready invasion of cleared lands by bluegrass and fellow pasture migrants. By Revolutionary times there was no doubt of bluegrass being widely spread through all of settled America.

The latter half of the 18th century was marked by adventurous Virginians crossing the mountains and founding a few settlements west of the Alleghenies. *Daniel Boone* and other explorers reported parts of Kentucky a veritable sea of grass. And strangely, at least in the Ohio Valley, the open land was already conquered by white man's Old World partner in exploitation, bluegrass. Bluegrass seems to have beaten Boone to the West!

It is unlikely that bluegrass worked its own way westward through the forests, or that the very early explorers and Indian traders would have dispersed bluegrass seed. Yet here was bluegrass, reliably reported, in the wilderness of Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky, ahead of settlement!

The most reasonable surmise is that bluegrass slipped around the mountains, via the St. Lawrence Valley and the Great Lakes country, with the French. *Marquette* and *LaSalle*, in 1672 and 1682, had opened missions in the Illinois country. Forts and settlements were established at Kaskaskia, Ill., and Vincennes on the Wabash by 1700 and 1702. These were reported flourishing when *Charlevoix* visited the area in 1721. The French missionaries were noted for ability to live and work with the Indians, and part of their program included distribution of seeds. The noted

Seed Prices — Whew

GOVERNMENT figures have been released placing the 1953 harvest of Bluegrass seed at 7 million pounds. We are now able more than ever to understand the reason for upped costs, since the average consumption of seed in this country is 24 million pounds. Seven million pounds from acreage normally yielding several times this, means per pound price has to increase—it costs as much to harvest and clean as when yields are normal. Unlike some commodities, there is no entirely satisfactory substitute for Kentucky Bluegrass.

If there is a normal demand for Scotts Lawn Seed this year, there will not be enough Bluegrass to supply it, so cautious use and economical sowing is advised—making every pound count. People are understanding and early orders indicate the wise acceptance of the oft repeated phrase "*use less of the best.*" A few have boiled over about the price and we don't blame them. Even though we may only turn up with about 60% of Scotts Lawn Seed needed this spring, it's the same premium formula that has made it the leader for 35 years.

traveler *Per Kalm* had commented in 1749 on the luxuriant bluegrass pastures of French Canada, and it seems reasonable to suppose bluegrass introduction to the Ohio Valley by the missionaries, a good half century before Boone ever saw Kentucky. *Birkbeck*, in Letters from Illinois, 1818, writes: "— Where the little caravans have encamped as they crossed the prairies, and have given their cattle hay made of these perennial grasses, there remains ever after a spot of green turf for the instruction and encouragement of future improvers—"

What, then, of the epochal meeting of colonists from Virginia and bluegrass from the west, in Kentucky during the 19th century? *Levering*, relating Indiana history, states: "Soldiers who fought under Gov. Harrison in the battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, discovered the superior qualities of bluegrass — on return home they carried seed

and sowed 'this grass which has made Kentucky famous!'

There is no exact instant bluegrass became known for Kentucky. Early plant collectors writing from 1813 to 1833 list *Poa pratensis*, but do not mention Kentucky bluegrass among its common names. Yet *Well's Yearbook of Agriculture for 1855-6* states: "—In Kentucky it is called Kentucky bluegrass — succeeds far better — than it does in any part of Europe where it is native". The adaptability of bluegrass, and its ability to live with man, made possible this joint venture in a new land.

Today Kentucky Bluegrass is very much at home in most of America. It becomes by adoption and descent as full-fledged an American as any family tree can claim. Starting as a pasture grass, bluegrass has risen to its greatest glory as America's number one lawn grass. *Kentucky bluegrass, pioneer extraordinary, is as basic to fine lawns as is steel to industry.*

Therapy in the Anteroom. "You were so thoughtful as to forward me an excellent loose-leaf binder containing the various lawn publications by Scotts, for my reception room at the office. It has had a very soothing effect on some of my impatient visitors in waiting; and they have darn near worn it out, passing it back and forth. I suspect that some of them have been coming in just to read up on their lawns." (*A District of Columbia Doctor*)

Interest in better lawns prompted Western Electric and some of its associated Bell System Companies this spring to order for their employees 200,000 copies of a special reprint of the Lawn Care book. These will be distributed through their Employee Booklet Rack Services at hundreds of office, factory and telephone central office locations from coast to coast.

MAR/APRIL "TO DO'S"

Feeding TURF BUILDER at normal rates for any lawn not recently fed. If a late winter feeding slipped by, it's *doubly important* to hurry for the handy Scotts Spreader, with an insouciant "better late than never" smile.

Raking Out Twigs, leaves, dragged-in debris or other such grass-smother and mowing harassments, need removing. For deluxe lawns brush up winter-browned grass blades before mowing, and rake out all matted material so seed can sift through to soil.

Seeding Time for seeding over the established lawn as well as new lawns. Scott Lawn Seed or Bentgrass for deluxe lawns. Scotts "Special" and Haven for quick take and rugged turf on utility lawns. Clover provides quick reinforcement to any lawn.

Lawn Pests If grubs are active in your areas, fattening on grass roots in the safety of the soil, an insect killer will be called for. Lawn & Turf Pest Control contains chlordane, effective against ants and other pests as well as grubs.

Mowing For the lawn's sake you should have started cool season mowing if your grass has put on any growth since winter. Keep the mower sharp, in good repair—and enjoy the privilege of mowing a fine lawn frequently.

For the deluxe lawn the mower may be set at about one inch through the cool of spring, higher later. Mow utility lawns at 1½ to 2 inches.

Headquarters for Scotts in the East is now in a spanking new plant at *Cranbury, New Jersey*. Correspondence and Soil samples for the Eastern office should no longer be addressed to Ridgefield, but instead to O M Scott Co., *Cranbury, N. J.*



Soil Test Service

If you are concerned about ability of your soil to produce a satisfactory lawn, Scotts offers an analysis service. A previous issue of *Lawn Care*, available upon request, discusses soil testing in detail. In short, here's what you do.

Collect several "cores" of soil from the surface to about 5 inches down, from scattered locations on the lawn. These can be dug with trowel or knife. Unless the cores appear markedly unlike, thoroughly mix them together, and package about one pint in a tight, waterproof container. Mail this to Scotts, and *by separate letter* advise what samples are being sent, including troubles noted.

Handling charges are one dollar for the first sample analyzed, fifty cents for each additional sample sent at the same time. *Do not mail remittance* with your explanatory letter: you will be billed after the analysis is completed. Samples should be sent to: O M Scott Co., Cranbury, New Jersey, if you live east of Ohio or in Jap Beetle quarantine zones (your post office can tell you), otherwise to: O M Scott Co., Marysville, Ohio.

Grandpa's Comment

"I don't know why I couldn't have one of those SCOTTS SPREADERS for my 80th birthday."

P S — He got it.

Complete LAWN CARE Set

Back chapters, in sturdy loose leaf ring binder that will accommodate future *Lawn Care* issues too, available at \$1.00 postpaid. Just mail remittance to O M Scott & Sons, Marysville, Ohio. You'll get complete instructions for making and maintaining the lawn.

Seasonally pertinent, separate bulletins from *Lawn Care* can be had for the asking: mention which topic you are interested in, viz. —

Spring Program *Grass in Shade*
New Lawns *Proper Mowing*
Lawn Feeding *Tree Feeding*

The *Lawn Care* digest chapters and bantam recent issues are also available in pocket book size at 25c.

Seed Germination May Be Slow

Germination of seeds usually requires consistent moisture and moderate temperatures. Even then some types of seeds take longer to send up green sprouts than do others.

By and large the perennial grasses are slower to sprout than the coarse annuals. Nature perhaps affords a parallel in trees, where it seems the quickest growing species are usually the weakest — the ones to break first in high wind or ice.

Don't be impatient if early or recently seeded grass has not yet carpeted your lawn. Better lawn seed blends contain a high percentage of perennial, slow-to-start grasses. You made no mistake if you sowed them in late winter on the firm footing of frozen ground. Chances are the seed is still lodged in frost crevices, ready to grow as moist soil warms.

A Research Institute Bulletin points out that a dollar saved is more than a dollar earned. A \$6,000 bracket family man has to make \$302 to have \$200 of after-tax pay with which to hire a job done around the house.

With reference to the same thing an acquaintance of ours tells that he makes \$10 an hour by working on his lawn. Here's how: If he paid \$2.50 an hour to hire it done, it costs him \$5 of income as he is in a 50% tax bracket. Then, if he wasn't working on the lawn he'd be out spending \$2.50 an hour at the club and that too would cost him \$5 of income. So he's ahead \$10 an hour when he stays home and gets his recreation

I just want you to know that seed did germinate as predicted and now I have a lawn that is the envy of the neighborhood.
Fairview Park, O H A DOWELL



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EVERY PACKAGE OF SCOTTS LAWN CARE PRODUCTS BEARS THIS TRADE-MARK AND IS SEALED FOR YOUR PROTECTION