

Lawn Care

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

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FOXTAIL

HERE is a wild grass that goes by other names, such as Pigeon grass, Pussy grass, Bottle grass, and Yellow Bristlegrass. Being an annual variety, its propagation depends entirely on the production of seed. The seed heads, resembling a fox's tail in miniature, appear from July to October. Foxtail seems to be at home all over the world. It is a common pest here in our country as a weed in corn and other row crops. New lawns not planted until late spring or early summer frequently succumb to a rank, smothering growth of Foxtail, when the seeds of this pest contaminate the topsoil.

There are many different members of this family although two, Yellow Foxtail (*Setaria lutescens*) and Green Foxtail (*Setaria viridis*) are the most familiar. The latter is more frequently found in lawns and other turf areas. There is such marked similarity between the two that we shall not attempt to draw any fine lines of distinction but refer simply to the family name, Foxtail.

Origin

Foxtail is another weed for which Europe gets the blame. It apparently came over with the early settlers as an impurity in clover seed and grain.

Once in the soil it retains its vitality for years, springing up whenever brought near to surface light and warmth. No weed has succeeded in more completely making itself at home. In every part of the world where carried it has become permanently established. On farms in every section of the United States the bristly head of Foxtail is a familiar sight. Too often it has come into town to establish itself in lawns.

Distinguishing Features

The stems branch from the base, growing from fibrous, clustered roots, usually about a foot tall although when started late and cut frequently, Foxtail has been known to mature seed when only three inches high. The sheaths (tubular envelopes which form the lower base of grasses) are loose, compressed and often tinged with red at the bottom. The blades are



three to six inches long and nearly a half inch wide, flat, smooth, and hanging with a twist. The spikes (seed heads) are two to four inches long. Extending outward and upward from tightly clustered seeds are greenish-yellow bristles as indicated in the illustration.

Hot Weather Weed

Like Crabgrass, Foxtail is distinctly a hot weather weed. The seed does not germinate until early summer when the ground is warm, while the plants make their real growth in extreme temperatures. In addition, it is favored in many locations by the absence of any real competition from good grasses. This is particularly true in new seedings where the grass does not get a good start in the spring. The seedling grass succumbs to the heat, leaving many bare places where Foxtail can grow unhampered.

Means of Control

As with other annuals the important thing is to prevent seed from ripening and re-infesting the lawn. Foxtail is easily recognized. Even before a seed head has developed, the plants are more conspicuous than most weeds belonging to the grass family because of the wide and rather stubby blades. A heavy growth of ripe Foxtail may be burned off but where scattered thinly in turf, the mowing off and removing of the ripened plants will prevent a new growth from the same source the following year.

Advantages of Fall Seeding Are Reported

"I can testify to the advantages of seeding a lawn in the fall. In the spring of 1935 we sowed lawn seed and it

came up beautifully, but later, during the rainy season, we found the lawn difficult to mow. The reason was Crabgrass. We spent long days in digging it out and finally had the ground ready for resowing. This was done during September and we had an excellent stand of grass before winter. This year, in spite of the drouth, we have a nice lawn with practically no Crabgrass."—Mrs. Caroline M. Beachler, Westerville, Ohio.

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"I thought you would like to hear of my observation in connection with the subject of fall versus spring seeding. A local WPA project of clearing and grading a section of a cemetery was started in the vicinity of my home last March. In April one section was seeded, then another in May. The work was dropped and resumed again in August. By September 15th a third area was seeded and the final, fourth section in October. The soil preparation was the same in each instance and the very same seed was used. There are now four distinct plots with a different growth of grass on each. The spring seedings are thin and show considerable weed growth while the fall seedings show a much heavier turf, a healthier color and fewer weeds by a wide margin."—Edward F. Moran, Fall River, Mass.

Weeds Not Pro-American

"You will note that my remittance is being mailed to you from Great Britain. I find that, although they have the most beautiful lawns over here that I have ever seen, they are troubled with a similar assortment of weeds that are so annoying to us in Connecticut."—Porter M. Farrell, Westport, Conn.

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