

Lawn Care

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WAKE UP YOUR LAWN!

GREATEST single handicap in an early spring lawn problem is that the start isn't early enough. It is human nature to wait for the *urge*, regardless of whether one does the work himself, has a regular gardener or an "irregular" handyman. That *urge*, of course, coincides with balmy spring breezes and has no special bearing upon when the job *should* be done. To do the thing right at the right time insures getting the best response from your lawn. February is the month when Lincoln and Washington dominate our thinking. We've always given the month to them. The home owner has the golden opportunity to give it new significance by putting feeding, seeding, raking, rolling and weeding in the same category with rail splitting and tree cutting.

Feeding. After such a winter as this, the first call of grass is for a good square meal. This can be served most any time now, even scattered over the snow. It's a good idea to make the

application in February or March while the grass is still brown and dormant. No watering in or raking in is then needed and there is no danger of burning.

It doesn't take a master chef to concoct a substantial grass breakfast. Turf Builder is already prepared and will give the grass plants all the sustenance needed, applied at 10 pounds per 1000 square feet.

Seeding. Another important phase of the spring work that can be completed while it's still cold is the seeding. This as well as feeding can be gotten out of the way before the rush of spring work.

Grass seed is not injured by freezing no matter how low the temperature goes. For that reason it is safe to sow before frost has left

the ground. Then as alternate freezing and thawing of the surface occurs the seeds find their way into cracks and crevices of the soil. This provides covering for the seed so it gets necessary moisture for germination when the



later spring sun warms the soil and showers or sprinkling keep it moist.

Many early sowers prefer to plant on one of the last, thin snows. The white surface makes the seed more visible, aiding even distribution. Thus uniform growth can be expected. As the snow melts, the seed is carried into the ground to the ideal depth for good germination. Such planting should not be attempted on steep slopes where melting snow may wash away the seed.

Cleaning. The winter's accumulation of leaves, twigs and other debris should be swept or raked off the lawn as soon as the surface thaws and is dry enough to walk on. It was formerly thought that this raking needed to be severe particularly where crabgrass had been bad the previous year. Now such drastic rakings are not advised unless the seeding is delayed until well into the spring when the surface should be roughened to provide a lodging place for the seed.

Rolling. Spring is the only time necessary to roll established lawns. Rolling has but one object: to press grass roots gently back into the soil from which frost has raised them. If seed has been sown previously it also helps press it into the soil.

It is imperative to choose the right soil condition, otherwise rolling will do more harm than good. The ground should be entirely free of frost, but not sticky. The surface may be only partially dry—damp but not wet. Lawns on sandy soil can be rolled without injury while the ground is wet, but most other soils, particularly clay, will be badly compacted. When dry they become hard as rock, halting the development of the grass roots.

Regardless of the soil, a heavy roller is injurious to the turf. A water ballast roller, either empty or not over one-third full, is sufficiently heavy. Trying to iron out the high spots with a heavy roller is especially damaging. Any low

areas in the surface should be filled with topdressing.

Mowing. The date of the first mowing depends altogether on the arrival of growing weather. It is a good idea to start mowing as soon as the grass gets much of a start. If the growth is so long and lush as to topple over there may be some smothering.

Deferred Program. While early feeding and seeding pay dividends in healthy lawns, seeding later in the spring does not necessarily doom a lawn to failure. It is much better to plant seed on a thin area or bare spot even in midsummer than to leave it wide open for the invasion of troublesome weeds. Late spring and early summer plantings do make successful lawns, but they require more weeding and careful watering. The disadvantage of unfavorable weather can be offset with intelligent care.