

# Lawn Care

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## CRABGRASS BATTLE REPORT

**L**AST fall LAWN CARE readers were asked to report on their experiences with chemical Crabgrass control. Quite a few folks did, some in detail. The editors regret that all replies cannot be printed and that much of the humor and personality of the letters had to be omitted for lack of space.

Crabgrass is also known as Watergrass, Fall Grass, Wire Grass and other names less polite. Some of the chemicals, in particular the arsenicals, have been suggested for Crabgrass control for many years, but actually only a relatively few readers have tried them. One trouble is that they are risky to have around. Two children died last year as a result of drinking concentrates of arsenical weed killers.

Rhode Island State College is credited with being the first to observe that

certain mercury compounds seem more toxic to Crabgrass than to desirable grasses. Other heavy metals have been tested but so far phenyl mercuric acetate solutions seem the most promising.

In reporting on their tests a New Jersey turf specialist indicated that mercuries killed Crabgrass without serious injury to desirable grasses, but that two to five treatments were required and with a material of potentially poisonous nature.

Crabgrass appears to have no friends but countless acquaintances as the following excerpts indicate. Names are not given to save these good folks from a deluge of mail.

### New England Speaks

One of the lawns which I care for had always been full of weeds. I used Weed Control and quickly got rid of the broad-leaved weeds.



Crabgrass in two-leaf stage, easily hand picked, also more vulnerable to chemical control when just getting started. (Scotts Research photo.)

Reseeded and got a fine lawn. The next year it began to fill up with Crabgrass. Then I used a Crabgrass killer on it. The next year, after more fertilizer and grass seed, I had a beautiful green lawn and no Crabgrass.

Burlington, Vt. F. M. P.  
Landscape Gardener

Two of us used one of the highly touted Crabgrass killers according to directions. Both observed Crabgrass grew better where the solution had been applied. In many cases I ruined stretches of my lawn where the applications overlapped.

We have written to the manufacturers criticizing the many changes in directions which they have issued over the past year. In fact, I have three containers with three different application formulas.

Taunton, Mass. L. N. G.

This year I treated an experimental area with a mercury product, starting the last week in June. Although half strength application was prescribed for bent grasses, three such, five days apart were sufficient. Not one plant appeared in the area treated. The grass was slightly lightened in color, but not enough to mar the lawn.

From your description of the two types of Crabgrass, I should judge that what I controlled was the small variety of Crabgrass.

Hanover, N. H. I. A.

¶ This reader's success may be explained in part by his geographical location. Crabgrass is not the pest in New England that it is on Long Island, Washington, D. C., or even Minneapolis. The plants in a closely-cut putting green are more easily controlled than in a lawn. Moreover, the small, smooth variety of Crabgrass is easier to get rid of than the coarse, spreading large variety.

### Canada, Too

You suggested we try . . . for killing Crabgrass. Gave the lawn six applications as we had a bad dose of it. It really worked. Crabgrass died off, leaving great yellow spaces on lawn. Reseeded and now have a fine lawn.

Ontario, Canada. A. McL.

### Lightens the Wife's Work

My experience has been with mercuric acetate and over two seasons. In 1947 I started about the middle of July, on a weekly basis, except when rain prevented, until the last of August. Lately I have used the more

recently prescribed concentration. This had a definite and at times lethal effect on some of the regular grass.

In spite of last year's treatment, Crabgrass appeared this year about in usual strength. I started chemical treatments about July 1. The first seemed ineffective. Due to rain there were but two applications the last of July.

The treatment reduced the infestation so my wife was able to pull the remainder.

Manhasset, N. Y. R. M. B.

During August I applied one of the new Crabgrass chemicals three times as per instructions. I wasted my time for it seemed to have slight effect on the Crabgrass. The arsenicals did a fair job but this . . . is a dud.

Rochester, N. Y. G. A. H.

### New Jersey Says Yes and No

In 1947 . . . became available in this area. I tried it on Crabgrass. After four treatments the Crabgrass became brown and dry. These areas were then raked, fed and seeded.

I cut most of the Crabgrass areas to 1½ inches, catching and destroying the clippings. I used the chemical again in 1948 on a small area, two applications eliminating it.

Little Falls, N. J. I. H.

In August I had my lawn sprayed with three applications of . . . with varying results. In some cases the Crabgrass died off within three weeks, whereas in other locations it seemed to have very little effect.

While this varying condition may be the result of a lack of uniformity in spraying, I am inclined to believe otherwise as the sprays were applied as uniformly as possible with a pressure type sprayer.

Plainfield, N. J. J. N. N.

### Differences Are Perplexing

I used . . . last summer, the first treatment in late May—followed with three more at one week intervals, all with a garden spray. The Crabgrass was eliminated and the good grass was not harmed.

For your information, I tried one of the highly advertised Crabgrass killers this summer. I followed directions but found it burned out the grass. It looks like straw in various places. After six weeks, some of the old grass may be recovering. I am curious to see if this grass will continue or if I will have to reseed.

Scottsdale, Penna. W. J. B.

I sprayed with a phenyl mercuric acetate preparation at the recommended rate two or three times with only mediocre results.

The company then issued revised instructions recommending that the material be used at a stronger rate. Doing so, I sprayed the lawn twice. No immediate results were apparent, but after three or four weeks I was pleasantly surprised to find that most of the Crabgrass had been killed and the damage to the other grass, if any, was not noticeable.

Hagerstown, Md.

H. M. P.

### Arsenical Success

We have removed Crabgrass from our lawn by spraying with an arsenical. It turned the lawn brown and dry for about two weeks. No Crabgrass came this summer but I believe there can be no permanent cure as the seeds blow from other places. My chief difficulty in using this product is in finding a perfectly calm day for its use as it is injurious to evergreens, shrubs and flowers.

Dayton, Ohio.

R. L. W.

My experience with chemical type killers over the two years indicates arsenic kills everything and mercury nothing. In areas of heavy infestation, I think the use of an arsenical is justified and gives good results. In no case did I note any injury to the soil since I got good stands of grass when reseeding the areas sprayed.

My use of the mercury solution involved quite a little work and did not produce the desired results. This may have been my fault but I did my best to follow the directions.

Quincy, Ill.

J. R. C.

¶ It is possible the weather following this treatment may have been too dry.

I purchased a bottle of . . . followed directions, applying by sprinkling in early September. In three or four days, I made a second application. In one week from the first application, the Crabgrass in that area was brown and in two weeks it was apparently dead without any ill-effects to the other grass. The Crabgrass is brown and dry and can be raked out of the lawn.

Detroit, Mich.

I. C. P.

¶ Crabgrass naturally slows up growth as the days get shorter and cooler.

I used . . . very faithfully, according to directions, suggested frequency and observed rain and sprinkling also. This chemical seemed to stunt the growth of seedlings but didn't kill them. Some clusters that I watched closely appeared dead after treatment but in spite of repeated doses, the heads of seeds came out

of what appeared to be dead stalks.

Flint, Mich.

F. E.

It was a very hot and ideal time to try my plan to smother Crabgrass. I had a lot of heavy crepe paper that comes around nursery stock. I put the paper over the Crabgrass and weighted it down with bricks.

I left it on night and day for ten days or until the Crabgrass was brown and yellow. Then I removed the paper, put it over fresh Crabgrass and proceeded to rake out the dead plants. Even if it were July and August, I seeded anyhow. Rains came and the grass grew very well. Today, over three years later, I have lovely grass and not one Crabgrass plant in it. I not only killed growing Crabgrass but also all Crabgrass seeds.

Bicknell, Ind.

Mrs. S. L. L.



**Large Crabgrass beginning to take possession as desirable grasses subside because of extreme heat. (Scotts Research photo.)**

I use the "squat, squint and stoop" method to get rid of Crabgrass in my lawn. The smaller shoots can be hand pulled. Others are removed by gathering the cluster of stems in one hand and cutting off slightly below the surface. The dug Crabgrass plants are raked up and burned. Then I sprinkle grass seed, Scotts, of course, on any bare spots. Should any soil adhere to the roots, it is a simple matter to knock it into the cavity.

Of course, it is necessary to stay on the offensive. Once the yard has been cleared, it is easy to "police" the lawn for stragglers.

Moline, Ill.

H. W. G.

I used . . . to treat 4500 sq. ft. in June, when I could first detect Crabgrass shoots,

without apparent results. Later when the Crabgrass started to throw its seed spikes, I used it a second and third time.

I could not see any results until late in the fall when other lawns showed patches of dead Crabgrass. Mine had disappeared, leaving my other grasses completely in control.  
Carroll, Iowa. E. J. K.

¶ Weather seems to influence rapidity of action.

I used two mercurials according to directions. Because of a late start, the results were not as satisfactory as they otherwise would have been. I believe none of the Crabgrass treated produced any seed. About Labor Day, I was able to clear the lawn of all Crabgrass, fertilize and seed. The result is a nice smooth lawn practically free of weeds.  
Kansas City, Mo. A. E. M.

I had wonderful success with phenyl mercuric acetate. Two applications and the tufts of Crabgrass withered. The good grass was not affected.  
Milwaukee, Wis. F. H. F.

Tried mercury, two applications, July 2 and 7, with a sprinkling can. At the end of the third week the Crabgrass was gone.  
Fond du Lac, Wis. W. E. R.

I made one application of . . . Crabgrass killer to my lawn this spring, according to directions, and nearly lost the entire lawn.  
Farmington, N. M. J. C.

### Other Control Methods

Just a few years ago, I decided to get rid of Crabgrass in my lawn. Simply sat down and pulled out all I saw as the seed was still green. My neighbors all around me have good crops of Crabgrass but only a stray stalk appears in my lawn.  
Cleveland Heights, Ohio. A. M. R.

Someone suggested that dry ice be used to "burn" the lawn when the Crabgrass is very small. The good grasses will recover. The writer mentioned that perhaps some means of blowing the cold down could be devised, but it seems to me that since cold goes down naturally, a little hand propelled fertilizer-

spreader on wheels might serve. At least, you might experiment with the idea.  
Montevideo, Minn. L. N. P.

¶ Several people have had this idea but it does not work. Temperatures below freezing will brown the Crabgrass but it soon revives. Crabgrass loves heat and has remarkable tenacity for life in the summer. Many investigators have been misled, thinking they killed Crabgrass in August when they only changed its color and delayed growth.

### It's Still Experimental

In general these letters bear out the results of hundreds of tests in the Scotts research plots. Results have been erratic—explained in part by the vagaries of soil, sunshine and rain, type of Crabgrass, stage of growth, timing and necessity of several repeat applications.

Where Crabgrass is a very severe problem, it may be worthwhile to try chemical control, at least experimentally. The directions prescribed by the manufacturer should be followed carefully, and concentrated materials kept out of the reach of children.

**Black Dirt** bandits are out early this year. They took a New York City surgeon for \$300 and his banker too. A man in Hartford let them spread his lawn for 600 bucks! An Ohio operator made a killing around St. Louis putting on worthless "lawn conditioners" at \$1.50 per bushel.

**CAUTION.** Do not make deals with itinerant truckmen. Know with whom you are dealing—otherwise you may be held up to pay at the rate of a hundred dollars for two dollars' worth of fertilizer. See LAWN CARE No. 97.

O M SCOTT & SONS CO.



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