

Lawn Care

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PUBLISHED FIVE TIMES YEARLY FOR LAWNTHUSIASTS

LAWN FOOD IS A TURF BUILDER

Over the past twenty years LAWN CARE has regularly stressed the importance of providing turf with frequent, well balanced meals on which to stretch and grow strong and green.

With each passing year the wisdom of this simple advice is demonstrated time and again in the letters of happy home owners who write such things as this, "Our lawn was never so thick and radiant until we followed your suggestion of putting it on a regular feeding program."

Nourishment is a necessity for anything that grows and certainly a lawn worthy of the name is very much alive and growing.

However, grass plants are not nomadic. They are anchored in one spot which prevents their foraging for food. Either they are served on a platter or they go hungry and deteriorate, eventually yielding their place to weeds.

Nourishment must be kept constantly within reach of their roots.

Why Lawns Get Hungry

One fertilizing a year is no more adequate for a lawn than one meal a day is for a growing boy.

Tremendous quantities of food are consumed by grass plants through their roots and translated into growth. To maintain that healthy development the nourishment used up has to be replaced. Frequent applications of a turf building lawn food throughout the year will do it.

Some amounts of food are dissolved in drainage water and carried down through the soil where it is lost to grass. It is particularly true on porous soils and with the ordinary water-soluble fertilizers. Nutrients lost in this leaching process also have to be replaced.

Think of your lawn as a plot on which you are doing very intensive gar-



The darker, richer color resulted from fall lawn feeding. Note the lighter off-color strips in right background where operator missed with the spreader.

dening—growing plants at the rate of about 400 per square foot. Consider each mowing as the harvesting of a crop. Then you will begin to see the importance of fertilizing with the right turf builder at frequent intervals.

Every lawn should receive a feeding in late winter or early spring with repeat applications through the year on a schedule such as this: (1) February-March, (2) May-June, (3) July, (4) August-September.

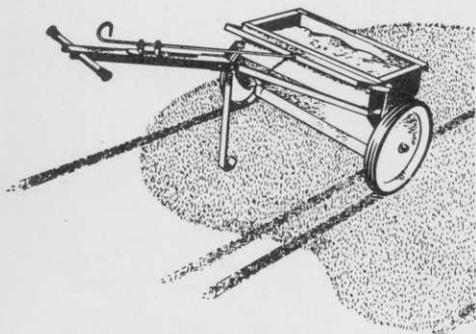
Feed Lawns Early

The spreader should be brought out early in the spring. This applies to any geographical location. In the snow country the first feeding can be made, and is recommended, even while the ground is frozen and the grass still dormant.

It is by use of a precision built spreader that uniform distribution of the fertilizer is most easily accomplished. This in turn results in a more uniform growth of the grass. Good spreaders are available for purchase or rent at most garden supply centers.

Plan to operate the spreader in the direction of the longer dimension of the lawn.

First apply two spreader widths across the shorter sides to provide room for turning around at the end of each of the long strips. Then go back and forth from one "end zone" to the other until the entire area is treated.



Be sure to overlap the wheel tracks slightly as you would with a lawn mower. Perhaps the best way to make

sure of complete coverage is to maintain the pivot wheel in position as the spreader is turned to reverse direction. This avoids off-color streaks of unfed turf as illustrated on the first page.

Some Lawns Need Lime

Under certain conditions, some mineral elements needed in the grass diet become locked in the soil and even though present in sufficient quantities they can not be taken up by the roots. In such cases the lawn literally starves in the midst of plenty.

This situation often exists on excessively acid soils which occur in the north coastal counties of California and parts of the Northwest.

An overly acid condition can be corrected by the use of lime. However, that does not eliminate the need for regular use of fertilizer.

SPRING LAWN CARE

Many LAWN CARE readers ask for a specific step-by-step process to apply to their lawns. For them this program is submitted as a guide, but bear in mind that any plan must be flexible to adjust to the varying weather and individual lawn conditions.

Lime. If your lawn is located in the areas where the map opposite is shaded, there is a good chance that lime may be beneficial.

Here are some of the indications of possible lime deficiencies: (a) failure of grass to respond to fertilizer applications, (b) seeming lack of response to watering, (c) lack of color or vigor when growing conditions appear good.

Late fall, winter or early spring are the preferred times to lime since it penetrates into the soil better then.

No more than 50 lbs. of raw pulverized limestone or 35 lbs. of hydrated lime per 1000 sq. ft. should be applied to a lawn at any one time. Avoid "quick" lime or oxide of lime because it is highly caustic.

There should be a delay of a week or two before sowing seed or applying fertilizer and then only if there has



Shaded areas indicate areas where soils may be of medium or low lime content.
U.S.D.A. Bulletin No. 1845.

been an intervening heavy rain or watering.

Bermuda Grass. Also called Devil Grass and Wire Grass. It is a subtropical perennial sometimes seeded for lawn purposes. Cold weather turns it brown and dormant. Even in southern California, Arizona and New Mexico where it is most often planted, it becomes objectionable in the winter months. To many folks it is a weed just as much as Crabgrass.

Unlike Crabgrass, however, there is no chemical known which can be used to selectively remove these blemishes to otherwise attractive lawns.

In summer Bermuda is difficult to spot by the uninitiated because it is green like other grasses. But in winter and early spring it stands out so that is a good time to go after it.

Most satisfactory method is to remove the sod in patches and also the soil for a depth of 3 or 4 inches to get rid of the fleshy roots. Then new soil is substituted, fertilized and seeded with desirable grasses.

Large areas may be renovated by vigorous cross-raking with a garden rake

and cross-scalping with the mower set close. Then fertilize and reseed. This method, however, only retards the progress of Bermuda for with warm weather it begins to revive from the roots still in the soil. A thick stand of good healthy grass makes it less objectionable but does not eliminate it.

Feeding. Spring fertilizing is a must. Use a mild-acting, long lasting lawn food. Every new lawn should have a commercial fertilizer raked into the seed bed before planting even though manure may have been incorporated. After the lawn is established this supply should be replenished periodically by surface applications.

Seeding. It is not necessary to wait for warm weather so sow grass seed. Lawn professionals often seed on frozen ground for alternate freezing and thawing helps to bury seed naturally. The earlier it starts the more advantage it gets from soil moisture before artificial watering becomes necessary.

This is particularly vital on recreation areas that have to be used for play the following fall. Early sown grass has more chance to mature and develop a substantial root system before being subjected to heavy wear.

Good seed of the desirable perennial turf grasses can be sown much thinner than mediocre seed. The reason is there are more seeds per pound so that using 2 or 3 pounds of the right seed will produce as many or more plants than 5 pounds of ordinary seed.

Even a good established lawn should be lightly overseeded each spring. For a medium sized lawn of 2500 square feet, 5 pounds is ample. It will reinforce the turf and give added resistance to weed invasion. On most lawns, a spring feeding and light overseeding are all that is required. The same precision spreader used to distribute the lawn food can be used for sowing the seed thinly yet evenly.

Rolling. It is a mistake to use a roller to flatten soil irregularities. That compacts the ground and results in a poor growing condition. A light rolling after

seeding of newly prepared ground presses soil around the seed and hastens germination.

Mowing. It is a good idea to cut the lawn whenever it grows enough to yield $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch clippings. Mowing in cool weather should be fairly short to reduce matted growth and give newly seeded grass a better chance to come up through the old turf. Cutting higher is advised as the weather gets hotter.

Weeding. In mild winter locations coarse annual weedy grasses sometimes appear during the rainy season. It is impractical to hand pull these and pock-marks the surface of the lawn. Mowing eventually eliminates most of them.

However, if broad-leaved weeds like dandelions, plantain, burr clover and wild morning glory are numerous, then trot out the spreader again and make a quick, easy application of 4-XD weed control or the combination weed control and lawn food.

ALGAE ON LAWNS

The slimy, green scum that appears on the soil in warm weather is due to the growth of Algae, one-celled plants that sometimes coat the surface of the ground and seem to smother grass. When the algae die they turn black and harden into a parchment-like film.

The presence of this growth is an indication of excessive surface moisture aggravated by the absence of sunlight. It is most pronounced on heavy, compact soils. Such soils drain slowly and lack aeration, both of which discourage the vigorous growth of grass.

Folks are sometimes both surprised and disturbed to find it forming on the surface of a new lawn. Here again it may have been induced by excessive surface moisture, applied to start the new seeding.

Easing up on the watering for a while may retard it. Some report partial success from dusting with hydrated lime which has a tendency to dry out the growth. The real answer, however, is to correct the cause by improving drainage. Making deep perforations with a spading fork will help to aerate the soil in localized spots.

Spreader Servicing

As announced in **LAWN CARE 113**, a service bulletin on Scotts Spreaders is available for the asking. This carries easy instructions for overhaul, gives prices of repair parts. Since conservation is again the order of the day, those who are fortunate enough to own a spreader are urged to get the service manual and follow the suggestions to put their machines in top condition. Just address a penny postal to Scotts, Palo Alto, California.

FREE INFORMATION

On Western Lawns

Any of the separate, previously published bulletins of **LAWN CARE** are yours without cost if you have a lawn problem and need help. Here are some of the subjects covered which may apply to your particular problem:

1. Lawn Soils
2. Correct Lawn Mowing
3. Liming Acid Soils
4. Grass in Shade
5. Control of Weeds
6. Control of Crabgrass
7. Lawn Moths and Grubs
8. Starting New Lawns

Lawn Care Books

If you want to own a complete set of **LAWN CARE** bulletins right up to date they are available in a heavy paper cover for only 25c. The same set of bulletins in a green leather style ring binder with room for saving future bulletins is only \$1.00. See your local Scott dealer or mail coin, stamps or check to Scotts at Palo Alto, California.



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