

Lawn Care

A discussion of the vital problems of lawn making and maintenance

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MOSS

Where It Grows and What To Do About It

WE think of moss as an appropriate covering for something *old*. The expression "moss back" implies someone who is painfully out-of-date. How appropriate that implication is when we learn that moss, according to botanists, is "presumably the relic of the original green carpet which covered the uplands of the world before any larger vegetation had been evolved." There is much interesting data available with reference to the life cycle of moss and its botanical structure but our concern is chiefly with its causes and extermination in lawns.

WHERE PREVALENT.

The fact that moss is often found on waste neglected land, around fallen tree trunks, on the roofs of old houses, and along abandoned fences makes it seem very much in place on poor, impoverished soil. It will frequently occupy places too impoverished for other plant life. Even where ground is too lacking in plant food to promote the growth of weeds, moss will frequently flourish. It is apt to appear also on ground which is water-logged and sour. Thus we may readily accept the statement of those who tell us that the two chief causes for moss in a lawn are poor drainage and impoverished soil.

CURES.

There has been a widespread notion that the presence of moss in lawns is almost positive proof that the soil is acid and sour and that lime should be used to correct this condition. Writers for years have urged farmers and others to lime soils upon which moss was found. Experiments conducted in recent years have proven beyond any doubt that lime will not check the growth of moss. In fact certain experiments conducted at Washington, D. C., indicated that lime might even encourage moss. The best method of ridding your lawn of moss is to improve the drainage in case you find it defective or fertilize the spots with a nitrogenous fertilizer. Ammonium Sulfate or Nitrate of Soda may be used separately, or better still, a complete fertilizer with a high nitrogen content such as Scott's Turf Builder, which has an analysis of 10-6-4, indicating 10 units of Nitrogen, 6 of Phosphoric Acid, and 4 of Potash. Golf course greenkeepers who have been consulted have recommended either the use of Sulfate of Ammonia or a complete fertilizer or spraying with a 5% solution of Iron Sulfate. The latter, of course, even though it might kill the moss would not correct the soil condition in such a way as to prevent its reappearance.

SUMMARY.

The presence of moss is an indication of inadequate drainage or soil impoverishment. The most effective cure then is to correct either of the conditions which is responsible. Lime is not only ineffective but may even make matters worse.



Spraying With Iron Sulfate

IN February *LAWN CARE* we mentioned Iron Sulfate as one of the dandelion destroyers. An actual experience with this chemical is reported by Mr. Edward M. Koch, of Canton, Ohio, who has this to say:

"I do not know what you have experienced in the use of Iron Sulfate (better known as Copperas Crystals) for Plantain and Dandelion. This chemical used one pound to one and one-half gallons of water sprinkled heavily on Plantain and Dandelion will absolutely destroy these pests. The grass will be burned for a short time but will come back in better shape. The leaves of the weeds become putrid and mushy in a very short time and the plants disappear inside of a week."

Most of the articles we have read on the above subject have advised the spraying on of the Iron Sulfate solution but according to Mr. Koch it may be sprinkled on without permanent injury to the grass. Has anyone else tried this remedy with similar results?



Beheading Dandelions

"For the dandelion raisers among your readers it might be interesting that we fought a losing battle until we adopted the procedure of picking the blossoms as soon as they came out if we didn't have time to dig them. I do not believe more than a dozen have gone to seed in the last three years and dandelions are the least of our worries."—W. W. Fox, 579 Arbor Vitae Road, Winnetka, Ill.

Winter Drouth and Its Effect on Grass

WHAT no plant can stand, winter or summer, is drying out, and that is the great winter problem of growing plants. They can resist cold but not drouth. We lose sight of the fact that very dry weather frequently occurs in winter, because we do not have the indicators of drouth familiar to summer: wilting leaves, clouds of dust, and uncomfortable thirst in our own throats. But these winter drouths are very real and so severe that even objects that are frozen solid lose measurable quantities of water through evaporation.

When plants are protected by a blanket of snow, the little atmosphere that is left around them under the snowbank is nearly saturated and of course the winds are completely blocked off. The falling of snow also means that the air has more moisture in it than it has in open winter, so the air is less thirsty and even the buds on the trees are not subjected to such violent demands for water. While a blanket of snow protects grass in other ways also its greatest service is this function of conserving the scanty winter supply of water.

In the light of these facts it appears that grass which looks hopelessly "whipped" after an open winter may simply be suffering from an inadequate water supply rather than from cold weather. There isn't much we can do about this except possibly to fertilize our lawns in the fall, get the grass in healthy, vigorous condition, and then let it grow long without mowing in the month of October.