

# Lawn Care

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## SHEEP SORREL

**W**E feature in this issue a weed which has been more abundant than usual during the past season, probably as a result of the severe drouth of 1930. It will be pointed out later why such a condition might readily bring a Sorrel visitation.

### Sorrel Means "Sour"

Sheep Sorrel is a common weed, being perfectly at home in practically every nook and corner of North America. Other names by which it is sometimes called are Field Sorrel, Horse Sorrel, Red Sorrel, Sour Weed, or simply Sorrel. The word is derived from the German meaning "sour." Reference is made to the sour taste of the leaves and possibly to the juice contained in the stems of the plant. This juice is considered by veterinarians harmful to horses and sheep.

### Easily Recognizable

The illustration here presented will enable anyone to identify the plant quickly if it is growing in the lawn. Note particularly the shape of the leaves. The plant is a slender perennial with an abundance of creeping root stalks. There are numerous greenish

red flowers, rather inconspicuous and certainly not pretty. In May or June a patch of Sorrel is readily seen from quite a distance because of the red mass of ripening seed heads. Each plant produces thousands of small triangular seeds about the size of a white clover seed. As a result it is usually in clover that seeds of Sorrel are found and from which it is impossible to separate them. Inferior grades of white clover seed are frequently the hiding place for Sorrel and doubtless many lawns have been thus infested.

### Helpless in Good Soils

It has been discovered that Sorrel is most likely to be found in dry, worn-out and acid soils. This is not because Sorrel prefers such soil for, naturally, it grows best in fertile, well-drained soils just as do other plants. In good soils, however, it cannot compete with other plants.

Following a season of unusual drouth Sorrel may be found in fertile soils but otherwise its presence is a rather good indication of impoverishment and a possible lime deficiency.

### How to Control Sorrel

Like most strongly acid plants Sorrel may be killed with chemical sprays.



SHEEP SORREL  
(*Rumex acetosella*)

Probably the most satisfactory from the standpoint of safety to the grass is iron sulfate (copperas), the same as used in Dandelion control. The proper strength for the spray solution is 1½ pounds of iron sulfate to one gallon of water.

It may be applied with an ordinary spray pump or even with a watering can if the outlet holes are quite small. Spraying with this solution will prevent seed production. If the plants send out new leaves after the spray has been used a second treatment will finish the job. *For further information about the use of iron sulfate see Lawn Care Number 6 for August 1929.*

Where it is not abundant Sheep Sorrel may be controlled temporarily by cultivation or hand weeding. A more permanent and therefore a more practical method of control is to feed the turf with a grass food high in nitrogen. Sorrel can nearly always be smothered out by a heavy growth of grass. While this weed is frequently considered as an indicator of an acid soil, it thrives as well under neutral or alkaline conditions when the soil is low in nitrogen.

The reaction of a soil should not be judged entirely by the plants growing on it. Apply lime only when a laboratory test shows definitely that lime is needed. Ground limestone, which is the best kind to use, should be applied during the winter when the ground is frozen. Ground limestone is slow acting and needs weathering before it will modify the soil condition. This type is preferable on established turf because it is not caustic and does not cake. The amount used depends on the degree of acidity as well as the soil texture. Never use more than 50 pounds of ground

limestone to 1000 square feet of established lawn.

### The Simple Art of Mowing

Telling a man how and when to mow his lawn sounds like advising him how and when to cut his hair, but the one is a matter of taste while the other is good or bad practice for the welfare of the grass. To keep a lawn looking well the grass must be cut oftener than it should be cut to keep it healthiest.

In other words the constant clipping of a lawn tends to remove much of the fertility which has been stored in the grass blades. Thus you see the necessity for frequent fertilization. Through its growing process grass feeds upon the plant food and stores it up in the leaves or blades. When the catcher or rake removes the clipped blades it likewise removes a certain amount of stored-up plant food which should periodically be replaced.

It is therefore claimed by many authorities, including C. J. Willard of the College of Agriculture at Ohio State University, that a lawn "should be cut often enough that the clippings can be left on the lawn instead of removed." Professor Willard has some very definite views of this subject and we quote him further: "The higher the grass is cut the better for the grass and certainly it should not be 'scalped' just before periods of little or no growth, such as come in July and August."

We shall have some further comments to make about mowing in fall issues of Lawn Care, for fall mowing practice has much to do with the ability grass has to withstand severe winters.

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