



your lawn today

by Dr. Bill Daniel

Even Very Green Lawns Can Be Improved By Overseeding, Good Turf Management

By Dr. William H. Daniel
Consultant to Lawn-Boy/Ryan

The green, green grass of home can be yours this growing season without becoming a slave to your lawn

But good grass can be yours only if a good, uniform stand of grass is present. Usually a good lawn can be improved by overseeding and good lawn management. The arduous and time-consuming task of complete lawn reworking, re-seeding and resodding should be a last resort.

The problem in overseeding is to get the seed in contact with the soil, so spread seed by using half of it in the more barren spots and the rest as light, all-over seeding. Keep

soil moist by watering, which tends to work seedlings into the ground.

Avoid Excess Thatch

After overseeding, your next step is to remove excess thatch (portions of dead grass, leaves, stems and roots) from your lawn. Thatch forms a felt-like blanket of excess organic matter, which holds seeds away from the soil. It also can harbor harmful insects and disease organisms.

Dethatching, aeration and raking improves movement of air and moisture to the grass-root zone and aids seed penetration. Check rental, garden and landscape services for

power aerators, dethatchers and sweepers.

Selecting a good grass is an important step in overseeding and you should choose one that is manageable, disease resistant and suited to your climate. Common Kentucky bluegrass is passé because it is susceptible to leafspot. But newer grasses such as Manhattan or Pennfine have been developed and offer more disease resistance than Kentucky Bluegrass. Leading garden shops can offer assistance in selecting new bluegrasses, ryegrasses or older fescue cultivars (varieties).

Fertilizer Speeds Growth

Force your lawn to grow, thicken and fill in by using fertilizer. Fertilizer speeds up growth, makes your lawn thicker and helps it recover from disease. But apply it carefully, uniformly and keep fertilizers and other chemical products off the sidewalk, streets and gutters. Be ecology conscious, but a sparse, thin and bare lawn is poor ecology.

Fertilizers frequently have a high salt concentration and can cause moisture to be drawn from plant cells, thus resulting in leaf "burn" (dehydration). Fortunately, most turf fertilizers are pelleted to minimize the chance of leaf "burn" because the pellets fall to the ground instead of sticking to grass blades. If your fertilizer is completely soluble, water it thoroughly after application to avoid the chance of "burn." One labor-saving technique is to fertilize before a rain and let nature do your work.

Slow release sources of nitrogen in turf fertilizers minimize burns and favor long-term feeding, which can limit the number of times you must fertilize this season to no more than twice. Slow release formulas include 24-4-12 (24 per cent nitrogen, 4 per cent phosphate and 12 per cent pot ash), 16-4-8, 12-4-8, 18-5-9, and 23-7-7.

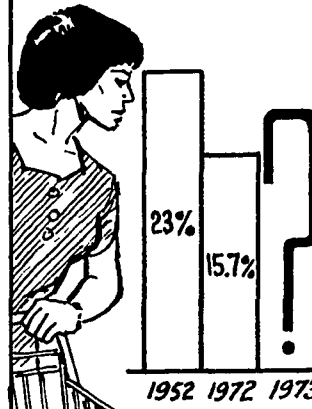
Guard Against Crabgrass

Incidentally, you can do three jobs at once by selecting a fertilizer containing fungicide for disease control and a herbicide for crabgrass and broad leaf weed control. Dacthal, Betasan, Bandane and Balan are toxic to all new seedlings, but are excellent on established cool-season lawns needing protection against crabgrass infestation. Siduron can be used con-

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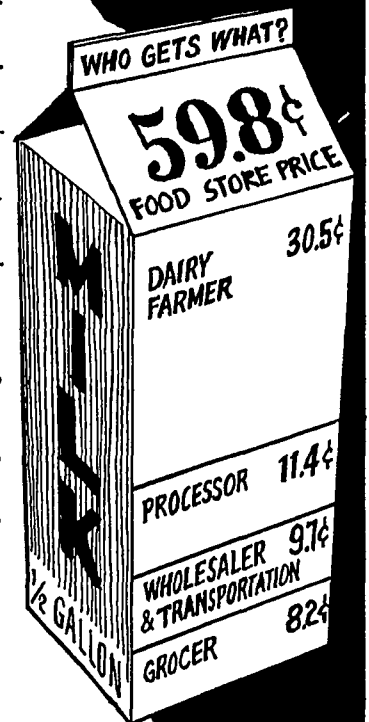


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Sources:
U.S. News & World Report, March 19, 1973.
"What's Happened To Food Prices", USDA, April, 1973.



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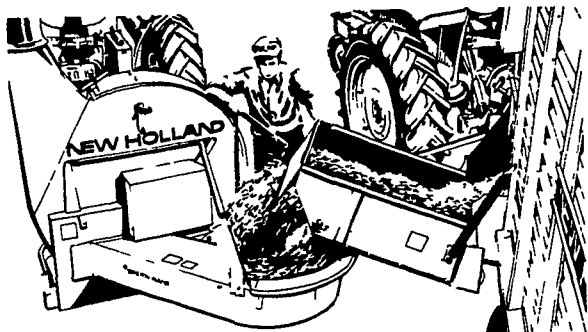
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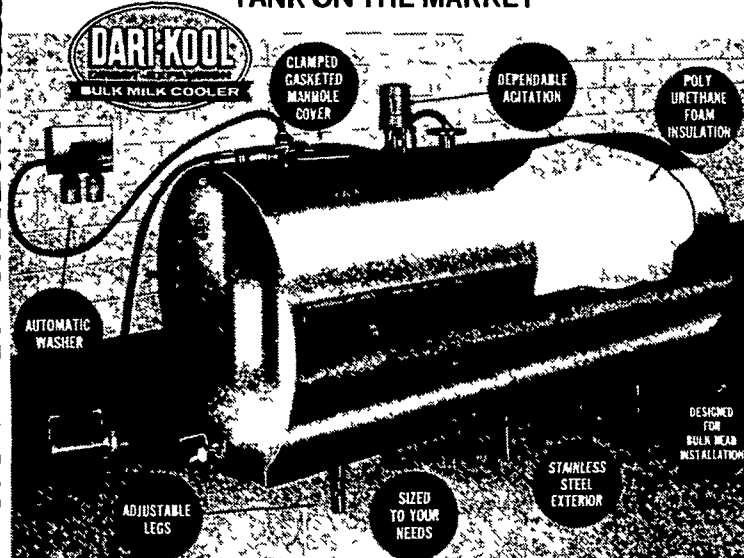
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Fix-It Tip

The power mower, especially the rotary type, can injure and maim and special precautions must be taken. Familiarize yourself with the controls and what they can do. Be certain you can stop the mower instantly.

Stand clear when you start the machine. Hands and feet should never be under the mower or near the discharge chute. Fill the gas tank before you start the mower. Do not fill while the engine is running or while it is hot.

Clear the lawn of stones, sticks and other foreign objects before cutting the grass. Such objects can be hurled with tremendous force. They also will damage the blades.

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