



your lawn today

by Dr. Bill Daniel

Frequent, Uniform Mowing Helps Grass

By Dr. William H. Daniel

Perhaps no homeowner's task is more taken-for-granted than mowing the lawn. But unless you follow a few

simple techniques and understand how mowing can help your lawn, you can defeat your purpose in having a nice look-

ing, tight and dense lawn. Before reviewing specific lawn mowing pointers let's briefly review why frequent uniform mowing is desirable. Repeated mowing weakens tall grasses and big weeds so new grass plants have a chance to grow and get sun. In addition, your lawn helps regulate crabgrass and other weeds.

Change Path Regularly

Begin by mowing around the exterior of your lawn and do not cut the center until last. Reverse the starting direction of the exterior cut every time you mow your lawn. After you've mowed the exterior, begin a normal cross-lawn cut. Every time you cut your lawn mow it in a totally different direction so the grass is never forced to grow in one direction. By altering your mowing pattern, your lawn will be more uniform and take on a picturesque appearance.

How high should you cut your lawn? The rule of two inches for common bluegrass, fescues and ryegrasses had merit when disease and drought were common. Today newer bluegrass can be mowed less than one-inch when disease has been avoided and density is maintained. Southern grasses, including bermuda and zoysia, can be cut one-fourth to three-fourths inches high. Such grasses have underground roots and can look rugged unless closely trimmed.

A rule of thumb is to cut your grass before the length of clippings exceed the height of the cut. For example, on two-inch bluegrass, you would cut it weekly or about 16 times per year on the average in the Midwestern United States. If in doubt, cut the grass a little higher, more frequently and with well-sharpened blades. A

dull blade will rip, tear and beat grass. Within limits, higher mowing favors deeper roots, gives more drought tolerance and generally permits less weed infestation.

It's not uncommon to have thicker grass when healthy grasses are cut close and often. Many lawn specialists are rewriting lawn care rules toward shorter cuttings because of new grass varieties, automatic irrigation, fungicide protection and special lawn programs. Yet if disease or stress occurs, the turf is more subject to damage when cut short.

Nutrients Can Recycle

Experiments have proven that repeated mowing can remove up to 50 per cent of the nutrients applied, especially nitrogen. So if you use a lawn bag to catch clippings you should use additional fertilizer to compensate for the loss of nutrients. Otherwise, your lawn could become weak and less resistant to weeds or disease.

If you leave grass clippings in your lawn nutrients can recycle in place, but you also run the risk of building up thatch and increasing the disease incidence.

Rotary mowers, especially self-propelled machines, can save you time in mowing your lawn and also are economical, adaptable and dependable. But

Gasoline Dangerous for Starting Fires

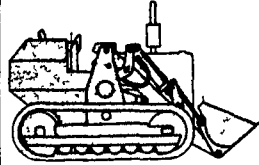
There are many reasons for not using gasoline to start barbecue fires, cautions the Cooperative Extension Service Farm and Home Safety Committee of The Pennsylvania State University. Kerosene is safer although extreme care should be taken when any liquid fire starter is used. On hot days a liquid starter can vaporize in the pit and explode when lighted. Remember not to add liquid fire starters to a burning fire - this is also very dangerous.

Watch Children Playing in Water

Keep a sharp eye on children playing in water. They can chase wind-blown floating toys or wade into perilous depths within seconds, cautions the Cooperative Extension Service Farm and Home Safety Committee of The Pennsylvania State University.

never leave your rotary mower running unattended on your lawn. Not only is it unsafe, but the constant rotation of the blade in one place can damage the grass.

Adjusted and sharp reel mowers can give a better clipped leaf tip and an array of them are used by professional turf managers on golf courses and parks. However, rotary mowers are a wise choice for the average homeowner. Remember that grass is a manufacturing plant and its leaves produce carbohydrates for other leaves, the crowns and roots. Thus, you must take care to avoid scalping, disease or poor mowing habits if you want a thick, green lawn.



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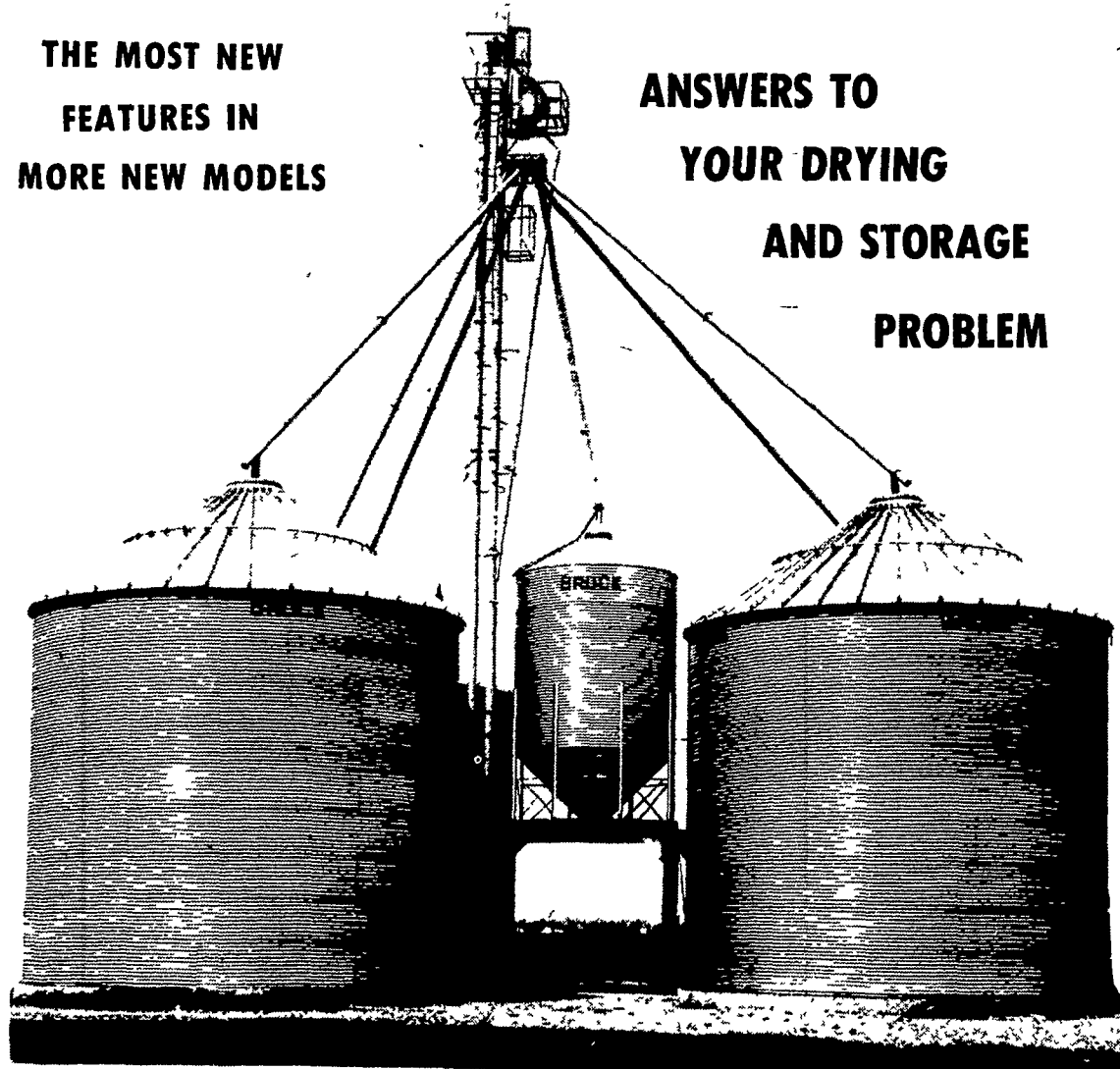
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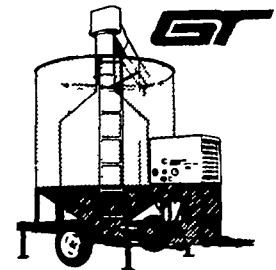
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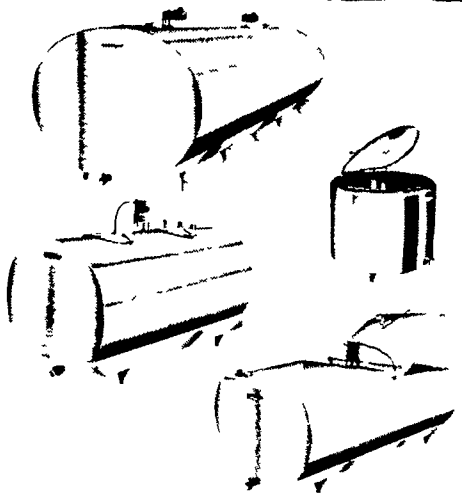
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