



your lawn today

MANAGEMENT CAN PREVENT DISEASE

By Dr. Bill Daniel
Consultant to Ryan

If your turf has a dead-look the first thing to do is nothing until you've gotten to the root of the problem.

You can waste valuable time and money by spraying your lawn with a fungicide just because you incorrectly assume color discoloration has been caused by disease. So, before blaming discoloration on disease, make certain your turf isn't suffering from chemical dehydration, insect damage or from a water shortage.

For example, if your grass is turning yellow but clover is normal green, that's a clue your lawn isn't diseased but needs nitrogen. Light and dark streaks of color in your lawn indicate it needs fertilizer.

Similarly, irregular brown areas can signal infestation by sod webworms that feed on

grass leaves and can severely damage your lawn. You can prevent sod webworms by treating your lawn in late spring with a granular or spray insecticide. A less desirable program, because it is curative rather than preventive, is two sprays two weeks apart to intercept the next cycle of sod webworms.

Disease does leave its calling card on grass blades. Turf usually is diseased if it has purplish-red, brown or black spots or lesions along the sheath and blades. But don't spray until you get a diagnosis and recommendations from someone qualified, such as your county extension agent or an experienced nursery man.

Grass is disease-prone in the summer when high temperature and humidity influence

rapid fungus action. Turf often is weakened whenever a combination of temperature and humidity exceed 150, thus enabling spores of inherent disease to thrive. Fortunately, grass normally recovers by itself when the weather cools and dries.

Obviously, diseases are dependent upon specific conditions and unless those conditions occur there is little danger of infection. The best defense against lawn disease is to follow a good maintenance program. That means selecting grasses adapted to the soil, climate and light conditions under which they will grow, plus fertilizing, watering and spraying your lawn properly.

The following common lawn diseases and their causes can help you plan a good maintenance program:

- **Powdery mildew** strikes hardest in shady areas and its calling card is thin grass with a white coating on the leaves. Primary targets are Kentucky bluegrasses and especially Merion. Prevent this disease by growing shade-tolerant grasses or pruning dense trees to improve air circulation and reduce shade.

- **Leafspot** flourishes during extended periods of humid, wet cold weather. It leaves grass thin, reddish and with individual leaves containing brown lesions. Fungicides provide leafspot protection and fertilization also helps the grass recover by itself. Avoid keeping your lawn continually wet by over watering it and cut grass two inches or higher.

- **Fusarium roseum** hits

bluegrasses in sunny areas during extended hot humid but drying weather. Rampant, but random dead circles are this disease's calling card. A partial remedy is to air-condition your grass by overwatering it until the weather moderates. □

YOU NEEDN'T BATTLE CRABGRASS

Spring is the time to spring into action against crabgrass.

Combating crabgrass used to be a time-consuming and hopeless task, but you can easily prevent it from dominating your lawn by applying one application of a pre-emergent herbicide before the seedlings develop.

The key is to do so before three consecutive warm nights (with temperatures above 50 degrees) combine with moist earth to break dormancy in crabgrass seed. The little seedlings emerge as light yellow-green leaves, rather wide, and up to one-half inch long.

You can stop crabgrass before the lilacs bloom this spring by applying any one of five major chemicals (Balan, Dacthal, Betasan, Bandane and Siduron) to your lawn after mowing it twice. Apply chemicals uniformly by spreading one-half of the suggested quantity in one direction, and the other half by moving at right angles or crosswise. That gives your lawn double coverage.

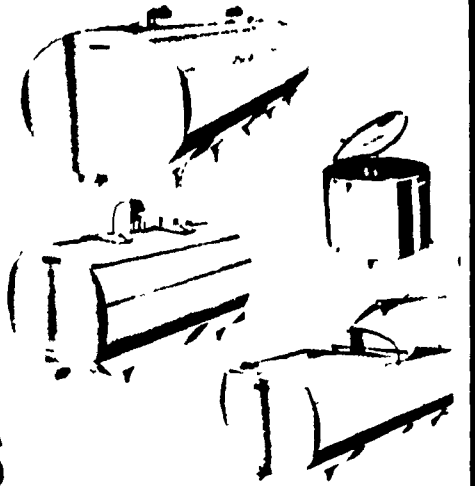
Crabgrass control is easy to overlook in spring because the weed is an annual and its initial growth is slow. But by early July, when hot weather sets in and favors rapid growth, crabgrass can dominate your lawn until the first frost.

Unless you stop crabgrass before it starts, it could be difficult to control because it produces thousands of seeds and must be sprayed frequently for full control. Since crabgrass flourishes in sunlight, one deterrent is to let your grass grow higher and denser than the weed.

If a crabgrass problem persists annually in your lawn, perhaps your management techniques need improving. When adequate lime and fertilizer are used, with high mowing (ranging from 1½ to 2½ inches), crabgrass seldom threatens a lawn □

(Editor's note: Dr. Bill Daniel is responsible for turf research at the University of Purdue and is a member of the American Society of Agronomy. Since 1950 he has been executive secretary of the Midwest Regional Turf Foundation.)

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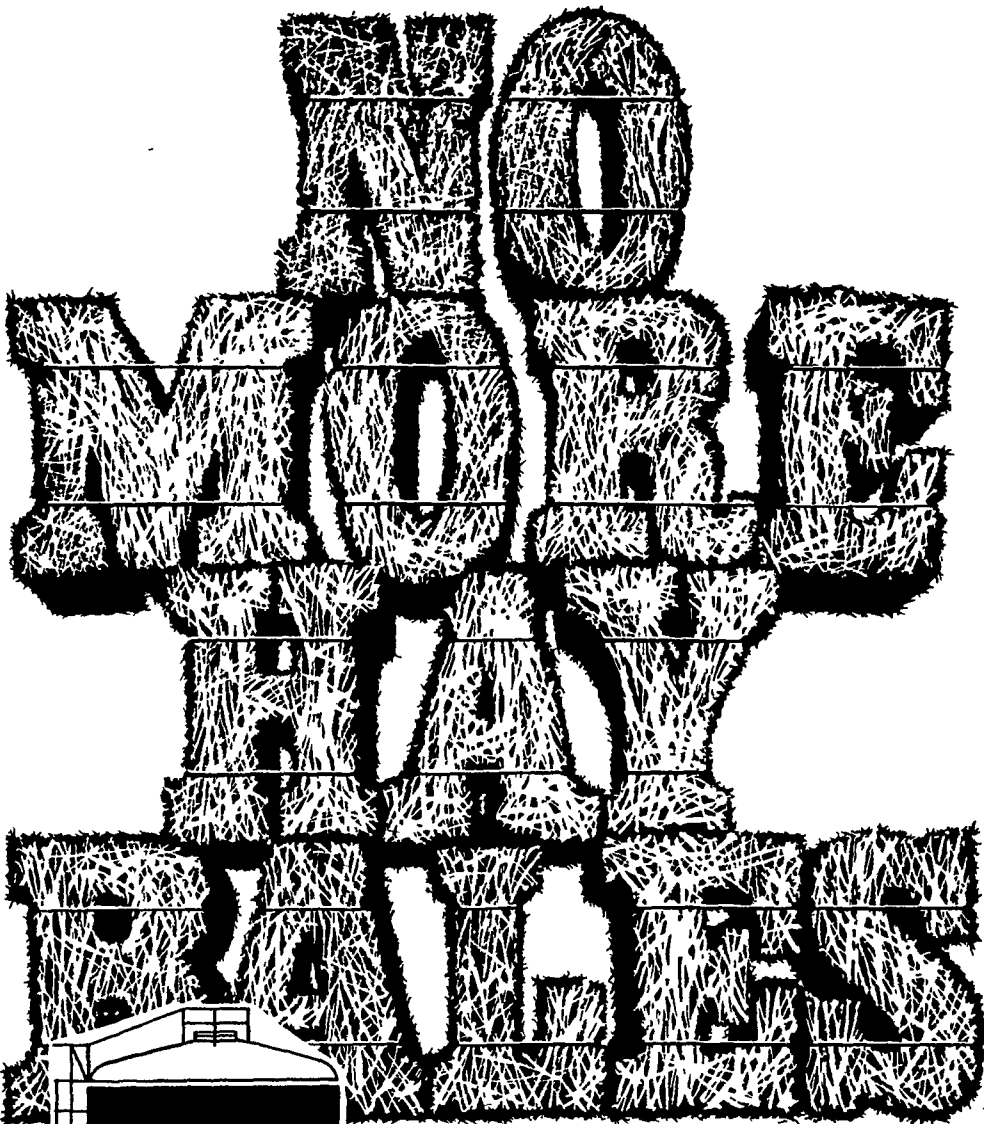
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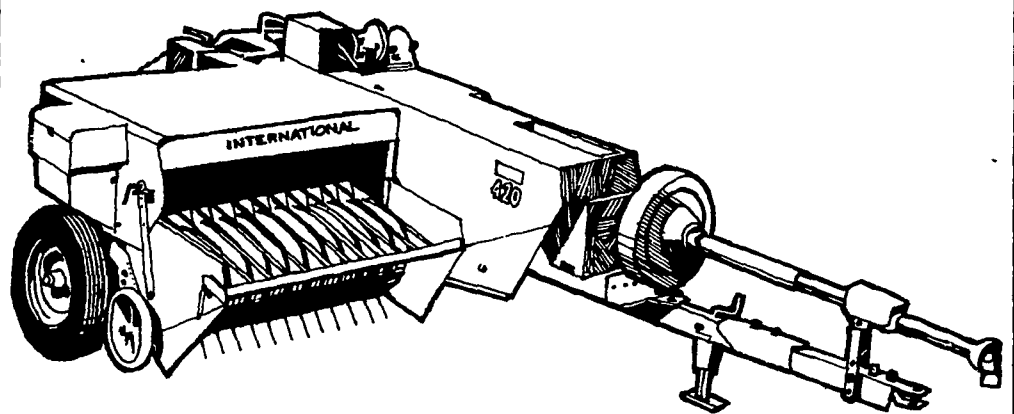
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