

OPINION

Very Encouraging

Our landfills are rapidly filling with municipal wastes. About 18 percent of these wastes are grass clippings, leaves, and branches.

A simple solution to this growing problem would be to recycle grass clippings back onto the lawn using a commercial mulching mower. According to Tim Fritz, Montgomery County agent, if performed correctly, this practice should not detract from the appearance of the lawn or cause an accumulation of thatch. In addition, this practice will reduce the labor to bag the grass clippings and valuable nutrients are returned to the soil.

Research at Penn State has shown that over a three-year period, the leaf clippings from Kentucky bluegrass contained between 46 to 59 percent of nitrogen (N) applied as fertilizer.

But while returning grass clippings to the lawn may be the most simple solution, many commercial lawn care operations and private home owners still want to send their grass clippings to the landfill. Lancaster County has initiated an innovative pilot program that diverts grass clippings from the landfill to fertilize farm fields. The local solid waste management authority has three farms that apply grass clippings to fields in a test-plot type research program. If the good early results continue through the trials, a workable plan will be developed as early as next year.

In a letter to the editor, a New Tripoli farmer, who has recycled grass clippings for almost 10 years, has a few comments from his experience.

"I started with grass clippings to use as mulch to help keep the moisture in the ground and to help control weeds in the garden. I applied four to six inches on top of whole sections of newspaper. It works well for most crops, but did cause a great increase in the number of squash vine borers in all vine and melon crops.

"My soil is very shaley and steeply sloped and over the last 150 years most of the top soil has washed away. In an area of about one-half acre, I had a commercial landscaper dump his entire supply for about three years. In addition to the grass, he dumped thatch, wood chips, and leaves. I added a small amount of sheep manure and some horse manure with sawdust bedding and some mushroom soil."

According to this reader, the results have been amazing. Even in dry weather, the soil retains moisture. After listing a "few negatives" — such as weed seeds from field bindweed that is hard to eradicate once the roots have been established; foreign matter such as grass trimmer string, bottles, shredded beverage cans, tennis balls, golf balls, and children's toys; and herbicide buildup that could be a problem if it came to the fields in massive quantities — the reader concludes: "All things considered, I feel using grass clippings and yard wastes is a very good thing. It is ridiculous to bury this rich organic matter in landfills, even if we were not running out of space."

We know the people who work the Lancaster plots for grass clippings have set their parameters to test all the negatives. To have the input of someone with 10 years of practical experience with recycled grass clippings is very encouraging, especially when the long-term practical experience in New Tripoli lines up with the preliminary test results in Lancaster.



NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin
Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Evaluate Weed Control

By this time of year, any weed problems in your fields are fairly evident and probably beyond control. But now is a good time to develop an effective program for next year.

The easiest way to check for the effectiveness of different herbicides is to leave a small part of your field untreated. This gives you a chance to tell what weeds were controlled and the ones that were missed. However, if you didn't do this, you should be able to find spots where the sprays missed. There will usually be areas near the ends of the field and will serve your purpose quite well.

If several types of weeds seemed to have escaped control, you should check the herbicide container label as to whether the material was designed to eliminate those weeds.

If your entire weed control program seemed to be ineffective, re-read the label to see if you followed instructions. Just a few simple mistakes during application can result in complete failure.

Either too much or too little rain soon after application can often cause a great loss of effectiveness in many herbicides.

To Be Aware Of The Western Corn Rootworm

Western Corn Rootworms have had a population explosion in Lancaster County corn fields according to Bob Anderson, Extension Agent for agronomic crops. The adult beetle can be found feeding in corn fields now. The adult is approximately 1/4 inch in length and is shaped similar to a lightning bug. The Western beetle has three dark stripes on their wings, and may look black or brown at times.

The adults are actively feeding on corn silks and tassels. If plants are not tasseling, the adults will be feeding on the foliage. The Western beetle has two relatives, the Northern which is green in color and the Striped cucumber which has narrow black stripes.

Corn growers need to be scouting their corn fields now to plan for next year's planting season. Corn fields which have an average of one or more adult beetles feeding per plant now should have an

insecticide applied to them next year if corn will be planted in them.

The damage being done by the adult beetles feeding on the corn silks may reduce pollination this year. However, after feeding the female beetles will lay eggs in the soil near this year's corn. Each female may lay over 1,000 eggs. Next spring, the larvae or worm from the eggs will actively feed on the roots causing corn to lodge. If you have corn that is lodged this year or appears to have no roots be especially observant and check all corn fields for adult beetles between now and mid-August.

To Beware Of Lightning Danger

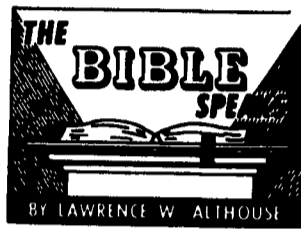
Summer temperature often brings severe thunder and lightning storms; and we've had some severe cases in recent weeks, and no doubt there will be more to come. We urge parents to warn their youngsters of the danger of seeking shelter under a tree or swimming in a pond or creek before and during a storm. In early

July there were 14 cattle killed when lightning struck a tree in southern Lancaster County. Safety in a truck, car or building should be encouraged as the storm approaches as well as during the storm. Stay away from electric fences and farm equipment that is out in the open.

Buildings with lightning rods should be checked to be sure the rods are grounded in moist soil and free of debris that would prevent the cable from taking the charge into the ground. Keep in mind the typical lightning charge is 30,000,000 volts and 25,000 amperes and carries heat up to 30,000 degrees F.

To Fertilize Strawberry Plants

Most strawberry growers have realized good returns from their plants this year. The prices are favorable and the market is there. In order to realize the maximum yield next spring, we suggest the plants be well fertilized this summer.



WHERE WISDOM BEGINS
July 22, 1990

Background Scripture:
Proverbs 30.

Devotional Reading:
Matthew 5: 13-20.

A few weeks ago, a friend who had graduated from seminary with me called to remind me that on that particular day 35 years ago, we had been ordained. I rummaged through some of my scrapbook materials until I found a photograph of my ordination class. I couldn't help thinking, as I looked at the photograph, how proud and confident we appeared. I remembered my state of mind as I left seminary and entered the parish ministry: I knew virtually everything and thought I could do anything! Or so I thought.

Then I dug through my files and pulled out a few of my earliest sermons — and shuddered. How cocksure of myself I was! I couldn't help thinking of the judge who said, "This court is often in error, but never in doubt!" That was me as a young pastor. Innocently arrogant! Unaware of what I didn't really know and what I could not do.

STILL ARROGANT?

"Does some of the arrogance still remain?" I asked myself. Experience and maturity hopefully have worn down the sharp corners of my self-confidence. I have preached to people and seen their lives deteriorate anyway. I have prayed for parishioners and watched them die. I have worked hard and long at certain projects and programs and sometimes seen

that still my efforts were in vain. Some of the time; and some of the time it has gone the other way.

So, although I am probably not so arrogant as I once was, I'm sure there are still too many times when my pride forgets my experience and becomes insufferable. For that is one of the besetting sins of human beings. Please note, I am not talking about self-esteem — we all need that. I am talking about self-esteem that distorts perspective.

That's when I need to hear these words from Proverbs:

Who has ascended to heaven and come down?

Who has gathered the wind in his fists?

Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?

Who has established all the ends of the earth?

What is his name, and what is his son's name?

Surely you know!

I AM NOT GOD

In other words, I need to remember that I am not God, nor his equal. Actually, that should be easy for me to remember, but it isn't. My pride continues to get in my way. My only consolation is that it is a false pride I share with most other human beings. All of us need from time to time to have someone put the world and ourselves in perspective with a question or a challenge. Says the writer of Proverbs, "There are those who are pure in their own eyes but are not cleansed of their filth" (30:12). That's true: when I have too exalted an opinion of myself, I fail to recognize my weaknesses.

For some, it is arrogance. For others, avarice: "the fire which never says, 'Enough'" (30:16). But for all there is a need to confess: "I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One" (30:3).

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Farm Calendar

Saturday, July 21

J&J Agri-Products Soil Seminar,
Chalet Restaurant, Dillsburg.

Pa. Young Farmer Summer Convention,
Ramada Hotel, Altoona.

PYFA Summer Conference,
Montgomery County, Tyrone,

Pa.

Baltimore Ice Cream Festival,
Lexington Market, Baltimore,
Md.

BCCA Summer Field Trip to Virginia,
Berks Co. Ag Center,
7:00 a.m.

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