



by Jerry Klein

ARMCHAIR GARDENING IS ALMOST HERE!

Our ingenious scientists have made it possible for you to have a luxurious lawn without yesteryear's back-breaking toil.



Top: With a power mower you can cut your lawn with ease; and if you attach the spike aerator behind, the packed soil is loosened, helping better lawn growth.

Bottom: Special applicator allows you to water and fertilize at the same time. Tube in pail draws the plant-food solution into hose, mixing it with water.

GREEN THUMBS are on the way out this Spring. So are sprained backs, skinned knuckles, and broken fingernails.

On the way in is a new era in which you'll be able to grow a rich green lawn with practically none of the formerly tedious labor. You'll never be able to acquire a lush carpet of grass without some work, but new mechanical gadgets and chemical aids reduce lawn labor to a minimum.

Let's say your lot is barren because the soil is sandy or hard-packed. Your local garden-supply or hardware store can recommend a fertilizer that will get it ready for seeding. They may suggest using humus, peat moss, manure, other organic matter or superphosphate.

You can also get a conditioner—to mix with the topsoil—that breaks tight soil into crumbly loam without spading or screening.

When and how you prepare your lot for seeding depends, of course, on where you live and the condition of the soil, but there are some general principles. In many parts of the country, the county agricultural agent or state experiment station will analyze a sample of soil to see if it requires sweetening lime before grass is planted.

When your ground has been prepared, it's time for the grass seed. It's been said that 75 percent of the seed strewed by the nation's 25 million lawn owners is wasted because it's the wrong type or is improperly cared for. So let your local gardening supply house or agricultural agent advise you on the best seed for your particular soil and climate.

To make doubly sure of a durable, thick carpet of green, grass seeds now are treated with disinfectant chemicals to help protect them against decay after planting. Treated seeds have produced more than twice as much grass as the same seeds untreated, and the plants are bigger, healthier, and greener, and have stronger roots.

Seed should be spread evenly on moistened earth, covered with a light layer of soil or pressed down with a roller or board. Then it should be kept moist as it germinates.

Almost as soon as the young plants are above

ground, they are subject to attack by fungus organisms. To fight these off, modern chemistry has provided fungicides to control turf diseases.

As your grass grows, it will be invaded by crab grass or other weeds. But no longer need you root them out. You just spray your lawn with special chemicals that kill the weeds but not the grass.

To lawn growers, crab grass seems to be Public Enemy No. 1. Before being killed by frost each Fall, this weed can throw some 90,000 seeds to insure survival in the Spring. But the new chemicals eliminate crab grass before it runs rampant. They can be applied with a sprinkling can, pressure sprayer, or siphon applicator which automatically mixes them with the water from your hose.

Also available is a perforated plastic film which you spread over freshly-seeded ground to speed growth. Used on grass, flowers, or vegetables, this plastic prevents the growth of weeds, retains moisture, and increases the sun's effectiveness.

As the days grow hotter, your lawn will get thirstier. But remember that frequent, shallow watering encourages weeds. It's better to water your grass less often, but give it a good soaking.

Such thorough dousings don't mean the lady of the house has to become a "grass widow" several evenings a week while hubby handles the hose. There are plenty of sprinkling attachments that water the lawn for you.

Thanks to all this care, of course, grass has the habit of growing. And the faster it grows, the faster your lawn mower must spin. But even keeping your grass trimmed needn't be fatiguing, with today's power-driven mowers.

You can even get attachments which enable your power mower to do a variety of other chores. With these units, for example, your mower becomes a snowplow, sprayer, pump, tiller, aerator, or electric generator!

Besides, the day may soon be here when you'll scarcely have to cut your lawn at all. American and British scientists have been working on a chemical to stunt the growth of grass. This triumph of easier lawn growing may go on sale soon.