

Spading Wet Soil Creates Hard Work

(Editors Note: The following is the second of three dispatches on gardening.)

By PATRICIA O'CONNOR

Washington—(UPI)—Spade in hand, you're ready for ground-breaking ceremonies.

But before digging in, squeeze a handful of dirt tightly into a ball. Then break it apart. If it crumbles, it's ready. But if it's too wet, spading only will make the ground harder to work.

Spread manure or other organic fertilizer over the soil and work it in with your spading. Remember soil just can't be too fertile. Old hands recommend spading to about eight or ten inches. But avoid upturning more than an inch of the hard subsoil.

Spading Is Art

Even spading is an art. Beginners often take too big a bite. Overturn a spadeful of dirt and shatter it as you go.

The city gardener may find manure too expensive for his plot and turn to commercial fertilizers. These can be sown and raked into the upper three or four inches of soil. About 50 or 60 pounds of a nitrogen-phosphorous-potash mixture are average for a 30 by 50 foot plot.

Now let's say you're ready to seed. With the help of your local garden store or the county agricultural agent, you have in hand the seeds or seedlings considered best for your climate and soil.

The end of a hoe handle makes a good shallow furrow—while the hoe edge is used for deeper planting of larger seeds.

Don't plant seeds too close together or too deep. In general, seeds need be only deep enough to lie in moist soil with enough cover to keep from being washed out.

In heavy soils, plant seeds a little shallower than in very light soils. After covering

seeds, firm the ground lightly, but don't pack it.

Experts recommend buying plants—such as tomatoes—rather than trying to raise your own from seeds, if yours is a small garden.

For transplanting, leave a mass of dirt around roots of the delicate plants and make holes big enough so the roots won't be crowded. The soil should be in a fine, loose condition.

Retards Growth

Transplanting doesn't stimulate growth, by the way. It retards it. You may want to use a starter solution of fer-

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tilizer and water to help transplants off to a good start. Gardens need cultivating after each rain or watering to keep weeds under control. Hoe shallow enough to remove weeds but not in a way to disturb plants.

Good soil preparation and cultivation are the front line

of battle against pests and disease. But once your garden starts sprouting, you'll want to be ready with spray or dust at the first sign of attack from plant enemies. Ask your county agricultural agent about insects and diseases most common in your area.

If eelworms—nematodes—are

a problem, here's a new tip from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

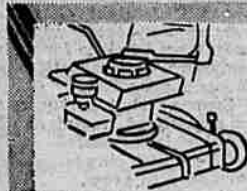
Experiments adding sugar to the soil dehydrated the pests.

It's too expensive for farmers now, but the tip can be of help to the small-time gardener.

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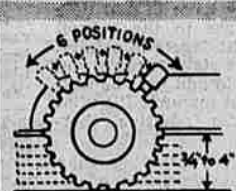
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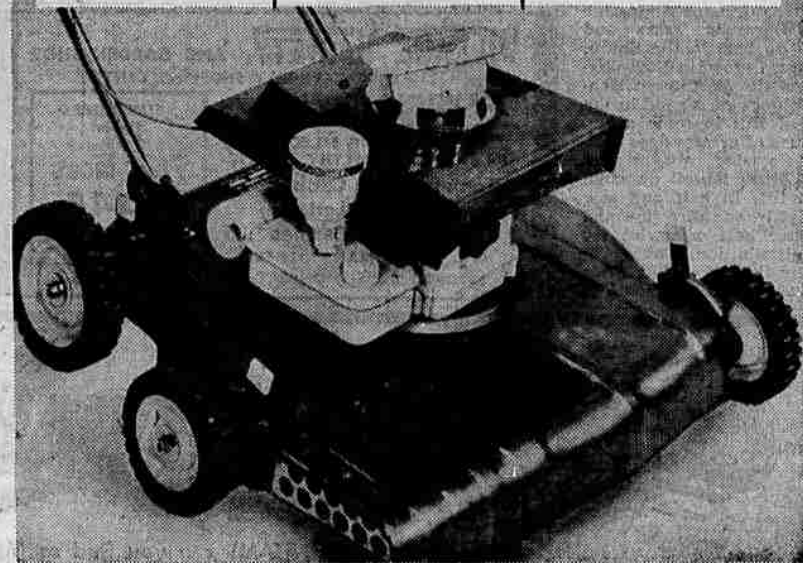
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