Check Off Items For Fence Work

Here's a tool check list for fence construction: hammer, saws, post hole digger, long string or twine, square, level, tape measure, soft-leaded pencil, shovel, and tamping stick—either a 2x2 or 2x4.

Materials needed include 8d galvanized box nails for toe-nailing, 6d galvanized box or finishing nails for nailing boards and strips, 1 bag of premix concrete per post, 1 bag of ¾-inch gravel per three posts, and boards for temporary bracing of posts.

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Still Time To Start A Cabin

With summer on the wane and the first tinge of frost in the air, a good many families will feel pangs of regret for the vacation home they wanted, but didn't get around to building.

But those who already own their vacation site can realize their dreams before winter settles in—at least to the extent of getting the cabin enclosed.

Autumn, with its cool but sunny days, is an ideal time for such building chores, and a simple cabin may require only three or four weekends for enclosure, especially if foundation work is contracted to professionals.

Come spring, the interior can be finished up and the family can move in with the first warm day, ready to enjoy a full simmer's worth of leisure time living, whether weekend or season-long.

Those who haven't already settled on their vacation home site or construction plans can get the project underway by reviewing possibilities.

A good place to start is with the booklet "Vacation Land Homes," available for just 10c. The booklet includes floor plans, sketches and a full materials list for each of eleven different cabins. Construction plans can be ordered later, at nominal cost.

To obtain a copy of "Vacation Land Homes," write Department 428-P, Western Wood Products Association, Yeon Building, Portland, Oregon.

On the lawn

WITH LARRY LAWRENCE

If I were a betting man I could take a lot of money away from people who complain about their crabgrass in April and early May.

A friend of mine complained bitterly the other day because he had used Halts early in the year and "now had more crabgrass than ever." I told him he must be mistaken but he wouldn't be convinced until I went home with him. What he had in his lawn was quack grass.

The fact is that winter kills all the crabgrass plants. Every lawn starts out completely crabgrass-free every spring.

True, the seeds are in the soil but they don't germinate until the ground gets thoroughly heated. You can't really see them until mid-June. Oh, an expert might spot an emerging seedling or two in late May but he'd have to be mighty sharp eyed.

Once you understand this cycle, control measures can be taken with assurance. In winter and spring (up to about the time dandelions are past the puffball stage, you use a pre-emergence product such as Halts which nips the seedlings in the bud, as it were.

But once the plants are growing it's too late for that and, instead, you then use a selective weedicide like Clout, that gets at the crabgrass through its leaves without harming the good grass. A second application, a week later, is usually a good idea.

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AT MSU

Tracks Down Mosquitoes

Tiny worms — only about an inch long and thread-like in width — show promise of eventually eliminating many types of mosquitoes.

A Michigan State University researcher has found that these worms, called nematodes, parasitize up to 50 per cent of the males and over 90 per cent of the female mosquitoes in surveyed areas throughout southeastern Michigan.

And when a mosquito is parasitized by a nematode, the mosquito is either killed or its reproductive cycle is so disrupted that is cannot lay eggs and reproduce.

Robert F. W. Schroder, a graduate research assistant in MSU's entomology department first uncovered this biological phenomenon by accident a little more than a year ago when he was beginning his work on his Master's degree. And he modestly admits that the implications of such a finding are almost fantastic.

"Just think what this would mean if this type of biological control would work on yellow fever mosquitoes," he exclaims. "We could drop the nematode eggs or adults from the air on mosquito hatching areas and virtually eliminate the carriers of a dreaded disease!"

Schroder, who first became interested in the mosquito problem when working on the malaria program in India as a Peace Corps volunteer, explains this type of biological control would save money, eliminate spraying and greatly reduce much of the time and effort needed to seekout mosquitos and kill them with chemicals.

"With biological control, the parasites do most of the work," he says. "We expect that the nematodes will be able to seek out the mosquito larvae and kill them or disrupt the reproductive cycle."

But nematode control is far from a sure thing. Schroder is currently working with Rozer Hoopingarner, MSU entomologist, "to find out as much as we can about nematodes and the mosquitoes they can parasitize."

One of the first tasks will be to find a way to rear nematodes in a laboratory. Large populations of the tiny worms will be needed in order to control mosquitoes under "field" conditions.

Another task is to find out if the nematodes are "host specific — whether they destroy only mosquitoes and not some beneficial organisms.

Schroder and Hoopingarner have already begun to collect mosquitoes that are parasitized by nematodes. They'll next wait for the worms to kill the mosquitoes, then they collect the nematodes and allow them to reproduce.

Finally, the MSU scientists will see if these nematodes can infest other mosquito larvae in the laboratory. If they do, large numbers of the nematodes will be raised and tested outdoors in mosquito hatching areas.

The parasitic nematodes uncovered so far are those which infest "flood water" mosquitoes. These are the mosquitoes which lay eggs in holes and ditches which eventually fill up with water and allow the mosquitoes to hatch.

These types of mosquitoes have been particularly prevalent this year since flood conditions have provided the water to hatch some eggs which have been laid as long as three years ago.

Schroder and Hoopingarner claim that even if the nematodes attack only the "flood water" mosquitoes, they could be a tremendous boon to science's effort to control the bothersome pests.

"We found as many as seven nematodes coiled up in the abdomen of one mosquito," reports Schroder, "Even if they don't kill the mosquito, they prevent it from laying eggs and reduce its hostility (tendency to bite humans.)"

He explains that these nematodes are not the same as those which live in soils and attack plants. Instead, they are aquatic species which make their homes in the same areas where mosquitoes are hatched.

The nematodes get inside the mosquito larvae when the insect is very young. Schroder explains that the life cycle of a mosquito—from the egg to adult egg laying stage — is only 10-15 days.

Each mosquito lays 100 to 150 eggs, about half of which produce larvae.

"Therefore, biological control —even if it is only effective on flood water mosquitoes—could be extremely effective," concludes Schroder.

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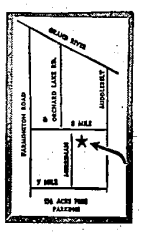
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