

# Don't settle for inferior grass seed

Now is the time to give your lawn a good start. At the locations you're ashamed of, rake out dead growth with a steel rake and use a weed killer to stop the crab grass (an annual), which enjoys finding an open place on the lawn to establish its tentacles. Spray now.

Fertilize after you are satisfied with your policing of the condition of the lawn floor. It pays to buy good lawn seed as the cheaper grades are filled in with inferior seed. You will discover some "fine" perennial rye on the market which is competing with Kentucky Bluegrass. Deep watering is necessary until it becomes established, unless Mother Nature covers the assignment.

Purchase your seeds and plants from a reputable seed company or garden center. Remember, the cheaper buy isn't necessarily the better buy. If you are planting potatoes, get them from a seed store or a farmer's cooperative where you can get certified disease-free seed potatoes.

Be sure to buy tomato seeds or plants from a reputable dealer. These



down to earth  
**Alice Burlingame**

plants should have been grown from seed previously treated for fusarium and verticillium disease.

The best way to start seeds inside and avoid damping off is to use a soil-less planting medium, available at garden centers. You can sterilize your own soil by placing it in a can and baking it in the oven for one and a half hours at 350 degrees.

As you plant your vegetables, remember that squash, melons and tomatoes are susceptible to the same diseases. So, separate those plantings.

HAVE YOU ever disinfected your garden tools? If you use a knife to re-

move suckers, a mix of 10-percent Chlorox will disinfect the knife. Rinse in clear water.

If you are a smoker you should realize that there are viruses in tobacco that readily infect many of our ornamental and vegetable plants. Tomato mosaic can get a good start from tobacco and will also attack green peppers. Smokers should wash their hands thoroughly before working in the garden. This rule is also applicable if you are clearing out diseased plants. Wash your hands after handling any plant that you suspect is diseased. You can sterilize soil in a trash bag. Add two and a half tablespoons of for-

malin (40 percent formaldehyde) to one cup of water and mix with a bushel of moist soil. Seal and don't plant seeds until the soil has been "aired" for two days as the odor is toxic to plants and bothers people.

There is a 4-foot shrub, Eriochorda (often called pearl bush) which in the spring has a mass of white flowers which look like pearls. Its growth is compact, and it would be a perfect selection for a courtyard. It has a long flowering cycle. I noticed it in the Wayside catalog.

As gardeners, let's get our ducks together. At any age, gardening as a hobby is tops. You get exercise, you get to enjoy the outdoors and gain a feeling of satisfaction. And a good garden (from trees to annuals, trees in the lawn, too) increases the value of your property.

Friends are another plus in gardening as you add to your list of friends by sharing plants and garden produce. If you stop to evaluate your garden friends, they are special people who are kind and friendly. Join the "club."

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