

Suburban Gardener

Flawless Lawn Era Began In 18th Century

By BETTY FRANKEL
Special Writer

A good lawn provides a beautiful setting for a house and garden, but as you push your mower around week after week do you feel like a slave tied to the turf? As you trim and edge and battle the crab grass does that lovely lawn begin to seem like the proverbial "millstone around your neck?" Or, if you are the proud

possessor of a new home and you are preparing to make a lawn starting from scratch have you ever wondered whose idea it was in the first place? According to Webster, "lawn" comes from the old Middle English word "laund" which meant heath or moor or an open, clear space. The old French equivalent "lande" refers to an infertile moor, specifically barren lowlands bordering on the sea. The

relationship to the word "laund" is obvious. The modern dictionary definition is "an open space between woods, a glade" or "ground covered with grass and not mowed and last of all, especially in front of or about a house or as a part of a garden, park, or the like."

The idea of an ornamental lawn around houses and other buildings is of relatively recent origin. The earliest gardens that we have knowledge of were walled patio enclosures with a paved surface and potted plants or a bed for plants. No lawn or grass to be cut. These earliest gardens were in the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

There is little evidence that there were lawns in classical Greece or Rome either. There were groves of trees around temples, and there were courtyard gardens that the houses enclosed. But, again, no grass.

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Plants Reach Record Heights

Gardens in the area are flourishing and as gardeners admire the results of their efforts they wonder if some sort of record has been set by a particularly tall specimen.

Mrs. E.H. Dukatz of 16434 Park Lane, Livonia has a tomato plant that reached a height of six feet a couple of weeks ago.

The Russell Matsons of 29926 Robert Drive, Livonia, have a 10 1/2-foot sunflower. Mrs. Matson said the birds are responsible for this one. It must have grown from a seed from their bird-feeder that was dropped.

Bruce Sachs, 9829 Brookfield, Livonia, attributes sun, soil and rain for the size of his tomato plants. He has Big Boy and Beefeaters that are 5 1/2 and six feet in height. They have had a dozen or so ripe tomatoes from the vines. He says his three Bonnie Best vines are just normal in size.

LATER, when the art of landscaping reached France and England and other northern countries, lawns became a part of the garden scene. Until well past Elizabethan times gardens were still geometric enclosures, but beyond the enclosing walls spread the rolling meadows of the English countryside. These were grazed by sheep and cattle who did an admirable job of keeping the grass cropped - the first lawn mowers.

Eventually the walls came down and the lawn came closer until it lapped the base of the house. By the beginning of the 18th century England had entered on a great era of lawn making. A style was set that spread around the world. Even in the Orient it became the vogue to make English style gardens with sweeping lawns.

The colonists brought the fashion to America - and the trend continues, even though our climate is not any where near as favorable to growing lawns as is the cool damp English climate.

Lawns have really come into their own in this country since the rise of suburbia. Each suburbanite tends his lawn on a mini-estate that is a direct descendant of the vast grounds surrounding the great English country houses of the 18th century. So, as you push that mower around, it may be a comfort to know that your patch of greensward, large or small, is a period piece that is part of a great garden heritage.

Many of us strive for perfection, seeking to make the lawn a flawless work of art. Others are content with a turf that is relatively smooth and level but that falls far short of perfection. Undoubtedly the latter kind of lawn is easier to maintain and is adequate for most situations and cases. It certainly is easier on the eco-system as well as on the gardener.

THE PERFECT lawn requires close and frequent mowing, heavy weeding, lots of deep watering, prompt removal of invading weeds, and constant surveillance for fungus diseases. When such a lawn was being built the ground had to be carefully graded and all slopes shaped and contoured into beautiful long gentle curves. The soil had to be deeply prepared and enriched so it was spongy but well drained and loaded with nutrients.

Even if all you are aiming for is the "good enough" lawn, it still should be built with care. It certainly is easier in the long run if the ground is well graded and well prepared and relatively free of weeds before the grass seed is sown on the soil.

When building a new lawn first remove the top soil and stockpile it for later use. Then grade so water drains away from the house, making sure there are no low spots in which water will collect, or high spots that will get scalped by the mower.

Till the soil so it is broken up to a depth of a foot. It saves the labor to rent a rototiller for this job. Spread a layer of organic material a few inches thick on the soil and mix it in. You can use compost or peat moss. Manure is excellent, but it is generally full of weed seeds that cause problems later. Finally spread on a layer of top soil a few inches

Potato Has Its Own Day

Spudacular-1972, a day-long event spotlighting the latest techniques and equipment used to raise potatoes, will be held Wednesday, Aug. 23, on the Meyer Farm near Munger, Mich.

The 500-acre host farm is operated by the brother-team of Donald and Gerald Meyer. Some 150 acres are planted to potatoes, and two irrigation systems are used to irrigate crop and soil scientists will be there to discuss the different varieties, and use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers.

Equipment representatives and suppliers also will exhibit and demonstrate their wares.

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8'	.99	1.42	2.06	2.61	3.39	2.45
10'	1.29	1.67	2.57	3.38	4.38	3.07
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