HOME AND GARDEN

GARDEN HINTS
By Dr. J. F. Fonder

Editor's Note: We are happy to provide for our readers, a series of articles by a recognized expert on gardening subjects, Dr. J. F. Fonder of Evanston, who received his Ph. D. degree at Michigan State college, after attending colleges in his native state of Colorado and in Utah. He has lectured extensively on gardening in many states and has written much on topics of soil and plant physiology. His experience extends into the practical business end of the plant culture, thus enabling him to write with authority on all matters, pertaining to the subject. Dr. Fonder's articles appear in this section each week.

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Crab Grass Control

Public Enemy No. 1 among the weeds that plague the lawn owner, crab grass has been the subject of much experimental work looking toward the development of an effective control measure. But as is frequently true the method sought after is so complicated that simpler and yet effective methods are disregarded.

For several years sodium arsenite and sodium chlorate have been used effectively to kill quack grass, Canadian thistle and other persistent weeds on farm lands and as a result the attempt has been made recently to adapt them to the control of crab grass. But since crab grass is largely a problem on the lawn any chemical control measure must first of all not be injurious to the lawn grasses. This makes impossible the use of either sodium arsenite or sodium clorate in the amounts employed in the control of farm weeds. The only possibility appears to depend upon the fact that crab grass may be poisoned by much smaller amounts of either of these chemicals than are any of the turf grasses. Rather definite claims are being made that this is true but up to the present sufficient work has not been done to demonstrate definitely that crab grass can be controlled by either of these compounds without at the same time injuring the lawn grasses. Furthermore, sodium chlorate, the most effective of the two compounds, is highly inflammable when in contact with dry organic material, such as the clothing, and is very dangerous to use. Therefore these chemicals cannot be recommended here until more conclusive proof has been presented that they are both effective and safe.

The key to the control of crab grass by an unpretentious but nevertheless effective method was given last week when it was stated that this grass dies each fall and new plants arise from seed produced the year before. Therefore, it is only necessary to prevent the production of seeds to reduce the amount of the grass to such an extent that it will no longer be a problem. Where the grass is not present in too large an amount and it can be pulled out without making the lawn too unsightly this offers an effective method of preventing seed production. But this is not always the case and too frequently the grass will be allowed to live its life with the result that the lawn grasses will be klled in rather large areas and seed will be produced to perpetuate the problem from year to year.

If pulling the crab grass appears to be too much of a task the production of seeds can be prevented easily by raking the infested area before the lawn is clipped. As was explained last week this grass assumes a prostrate habit of growth during the early part of August and sends out long runners or seed stems which mature seeds soon thereafter. Raking will lift the grass stems up so that the mower can clip them off and thus prevent the maturing of the seeds. It is usually necessary to rake in several directions to lift all of the stems and the grass should be clipped immediately to prevent the stems reclining again below the level of the cutter bar of the mower.

Follow Procedure Carefully

It is not intended to convey the impression that the control of crab grass by the method of raking and clipping is a one year proposition or that it will be effective unless done carefully. But this method has been used effectively for several years on golf courses and lawns with the result that the second year the amount of crab grass present has been greatly reduced and the third year it has ceased to be a problem of more than slight importance. At the same time lifting and clipping the hunners produced by the grass eliminates those portions principally responsible for the smothering of the lawn grass and the usual injury caused by this grass is immediately reduced. In fact, clipping the seed stems at the time the spikes are setting seeds so devitalizes the crab grass that the plants frequently die without having done more than slight injury to the lawn.

In a few locations crab grass is now producing seed stems and these areas should be raked now. But generally the grass is still too young to make a raking at this time effective. It is probable that next week will present a different situation and further comments will be made at that time.

Dust Mulch Protects Against Hot Weather

Dry weather and a light soil oftentimes mean the end of an otherwise good vegetable garden. There are precautions, however, which may be taken to prevent disaster, and the simplest and easiest is the dust mulch.

Going to work on the basis that there is always, even in the driest of soils, a constant upward flow of moisture from below, the business of the dust mulch is obviously to capture and retain that moisture before it is dissipated by coming in contact with the air.

This is done by loosening the subsoil and pulverizing the surface, and thereby relieving the pressure which forces the moisture to the surface. Aside from adding a good humus to the soil, this ancient method of moisture conservation is the best.

Some of Finest Annuals Require Plenty of Water

Some of the finest annuals commonly grown do not do their full duty because they don't get enough to drink. In other words, they do not get the required amount of moisture to give their best results. Some annuals are much more susceptible to lack of liberal moisture than others. At the top of the list might be placed the sweet pea.

You can't have good sweet peas without giving them cool, moist growing quarters. At the same time they must not be water-logged. All the annuals which like to have their feet damp dislike to have them really wet. Asters require a liberal supply of moisture and will not give the fine huge blooms of which they are capable if they are allowed to go into a dry spell without liberal application of the hose.

Wants Hot Head, Moist Feet

The zinnia stands heat well but it never is as fine as when it has a hot head and moist feet. The dahlia is another Mexican that likes this same condition and won't thrive if it dries out. It's goodby to a successful dahlia season if they get dried out and turn woody. The Coltness hybrid dahlias are now universally grown as annuals and they are as brilliant as the zinnias but they must have plenty of water.

The best snapdragons likewise demand liberal moisture although this is a plant that will stand dry quarters. While they will live, the bloom will not be more than half the size it may be made to attain with good moisture conditions.

Everyone with any experience in growing pansies knows that if he is going to have any success with them that moisture is the chief requirement and the warmer it gets the more regularly must the pansies be supplied with water.

The ten-weeks stock is another plant that is rather insistent on getting its drinks regularly. Give it good lime, soil and water and it will be one of the most satisfactory plants in the garden. But lime it must have to flourish.

Suggest Water-Resisting Materials for Bathroom

Many materials particularly adapted for bathroom use, due to their water-resisting qualities, are available to home owners.

Linoleum, waterproof wallpaper, asbestos wainscoting, aphalt tile flooring, metal tile, rubber, ceramic, and glass tile can be added and will prove more sanitary than more absorbent materials.

CAULIFLOWER THIRSTY

Plenty of moisture is necessary to grow good cauliflower heads. Thev do poorly in dry spots or during dry spells in the weather, so give them your attention with the hose. To produce whiteness in the heads and protect them against the wind, bend the leaves over the heads in such a manner as to protect them from the sun and weather. This is called blanching.