

Home & Garden

Caring for your lawn helps the environment

Perfect for lounging, ball games and cookouts, your lawn is a real asset to your home. Did you know that your lawn – and how to care for it – also can help the environment?

Your lawn may only be a small piece of land, but all the lawns across the country cover a lot of ground. That's why taking care of the environment begins in your own backyard. Caring for your lawn can have a bigger impact than you might think.

You don't have to be an

expert to grow a healthy lawn. Just keep in mind that the secret is to work with nature. Healthy grass provides a feeding ground for birds, which find it a rich source of insects, worms and other food. Thick grass prevents soil erosion, filters contaminants from rainwater and absorbs many types of airborne pollutants, like dust and soot. Grass is also highly efficient at converting carbon dioxide to oxygen.

There are a few things you should know to ensure that your lawn and the envi-

ronment remain healthy:

The first thing to start with is the soil. They key things to remember are texture, nutrients and pH balance. Lawns grow best in intermediate or "loamy" soils that have a mix of clay, silt and sand. Whatever soil type you have, you probably can improve it by periodically adding compost, manure or grass clippings.

Some lawns are too packed down or have too much clay, which blocks the penetration of air and water. Your lawn may need to be aerated by pulling plugs of soil out to create air spaces.

Most lawns need to be fertilized every year. They

need more nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium than soils usually contain. Use a slow release lawn fertilizer and have the pH of your lawn tested periodically to ensure that the grass can best absorb the nutrients (pH6.5 to 7.0 is best).

The right type of grass – one that suits your needs and likes the local weather – will give better results. If you're putting in a new lawn, it's worth your while to identify the best type of grass. Grasses vary in the type of climate they prefer.

The right lawn-care plan can help to make your yard – and the environment – beautiful.

Top-dressing made easy

If you're looking to make your neighbours green with envy by growing a healthy, hearty lawn, take note. There's an easy, inexpensive way to reduce disease, thatch and the amount of water and fertilizer your lawn requires. It's called "top-dressing."

To top-dress a lawn, simply spread a ¼ to ½ inch layer of peat moss over the entire lawn with a leaf rake once every year or two. Do it anytime from early spring to late fall. Peat moss will gradually condition the soil and save water by absorbing and holding moisture.

To get the maximum benefits of peat moss, aerate your lawn first. Aeration removes plugs of soil from the lawn, loosening compacted areas and promoting deeper grass root growth.

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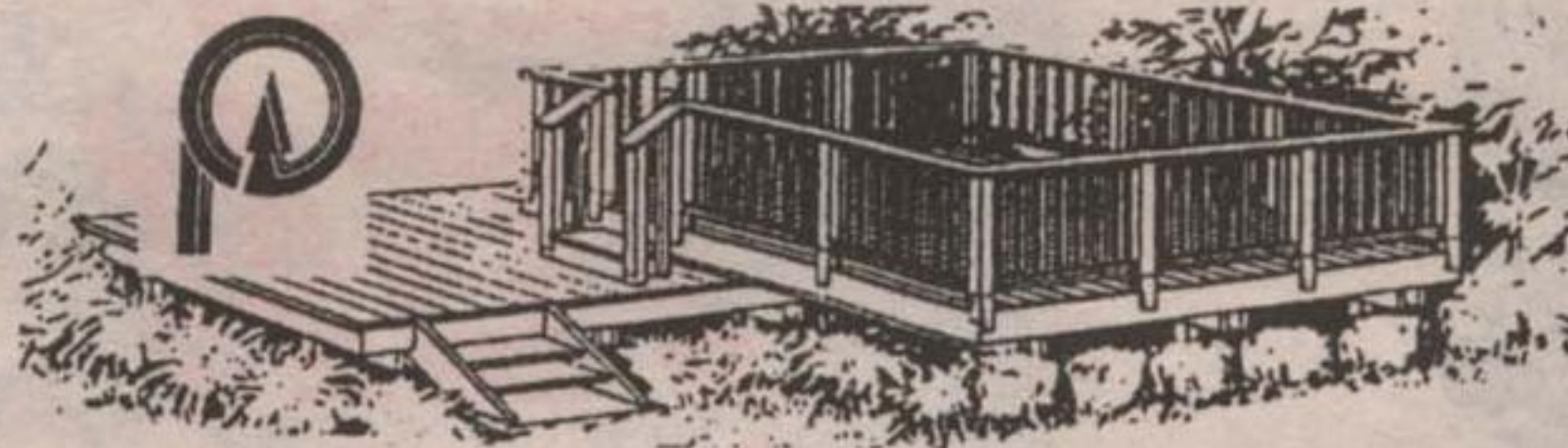
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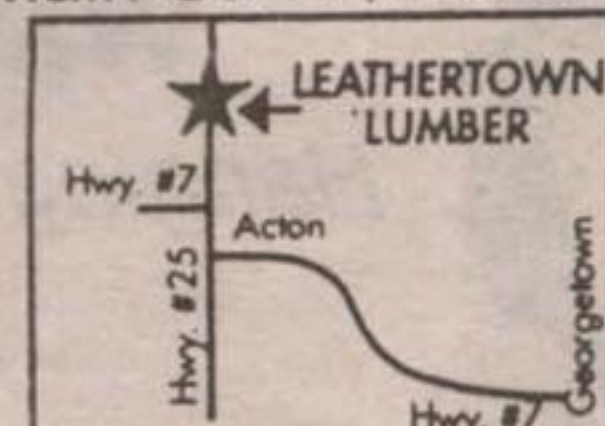
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