

# Your lawn is a busy place

Continued from pg. 4

Some types attach themselves to the roots of plants and fix nitrogen from the air into a solid form that the plant can use. The life span of a single bacterium is only a few hours and the bodies are continuously in the process of decay, releasing fixed ammonium and nitrates for the use of the host plant. Other forms of bacteria live freely in the soil and trap the nitrogen so it becomes available to plants.

Fungi are second in population only to bacteria in the soil, at about 10,000 to three million per spoonful of soil. Fungi are useful in the soil because they break down some resistant soil components, as well as sugars, starches and proteins. Dead fungi add to the soil's organic matter.

Both moulds and actinomycetes decompose organic matter-actinomycetes are also used in the manufacture of many kinds of antibiotics. Algae are present in the water and the soil. They add organic matter to the soil, and some can even fix

nitrogen from the atmosphere.

These organisms are born, eat, expel waste, die and decompose, all within the soil. Those that burrow through the soil profile are constantly bringing up useful materials for plant life and aerating the soil in the process. Others make the soil nutrients more available to the higher plants.

Healthy plants growing on the surface of the lawn are also an important part of the lawn's ecosystem. Applying either organic or manufactured fertilizers, following the directions on the label, will provide the nutrients your lawn needs to grow at a healthy rate and resist disease. Those plants will return leaves, roots and clippings as valuable organic matter to the soil's ecosystem.

Both flora and fauna form an intricate part of the soil complex-the miracle of life that exists quietly beneath your feet.

—By Paul Lefebvre  
Turf and Garden Committee  
The Fertilizer Institute of Ontario

## Mow your lawn the earth-friendly way

If you still mow your lawn in the traditional way, you probably face the same problem over and over again: grass clippings.

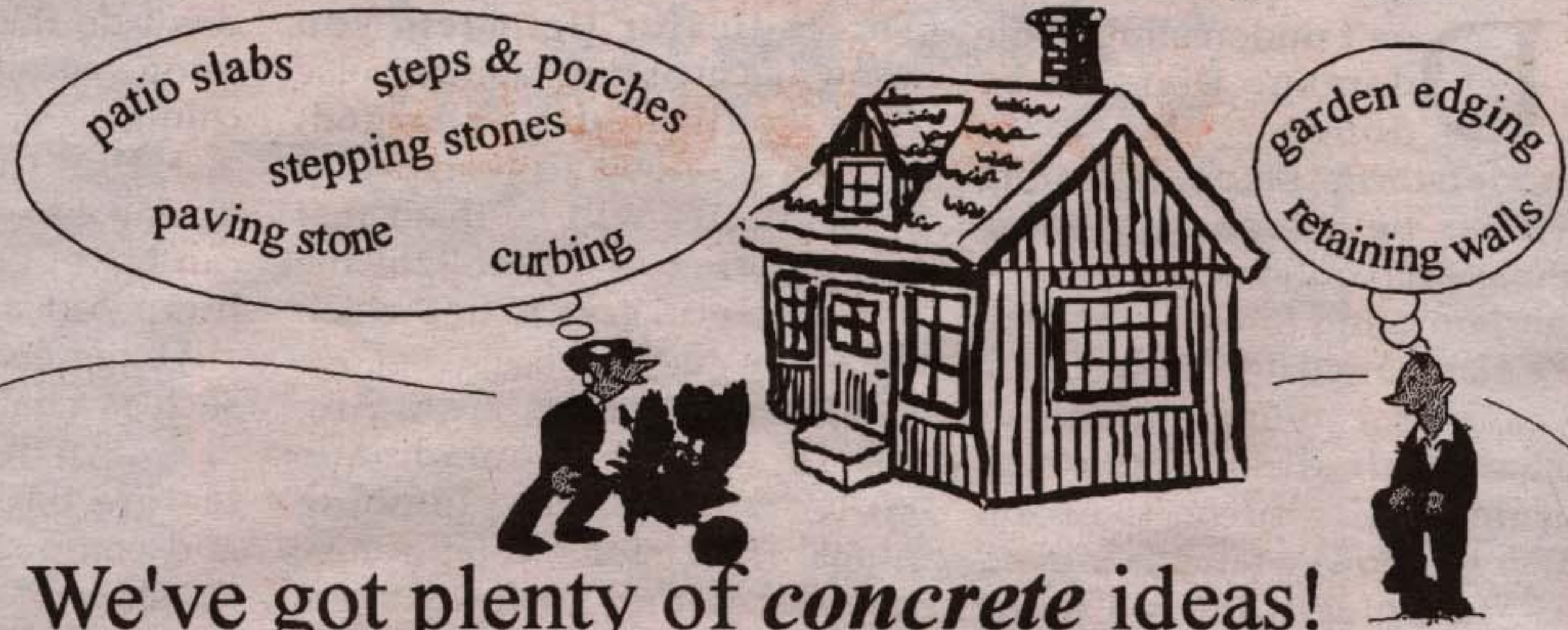
You may not know it, but keeping grass clippings on the lawn can actually make a lawn healthier by returning vital nitrogen to the soil, effectively enriching your lawn every time you mow.

So what do you do? First, mow more often. A side-discharge mower keeps clippings to a minimum and spreads them evenly over your lawn, so you won't need to rake.

If you use a bagging attachment, you can transfer clippings to a compost pile that will provide you with natural, organically enriched earth for feeding vegetables and plants later on.

Besides mowing, you could try mulching. Mulching mowers and mulching blade attachments put grass clippings to work for you. By cutting and then recutting grass, a mulching blade produces fine particles that can barely be seen. These small particles decompose quickly, returning nutrients to your lawn.

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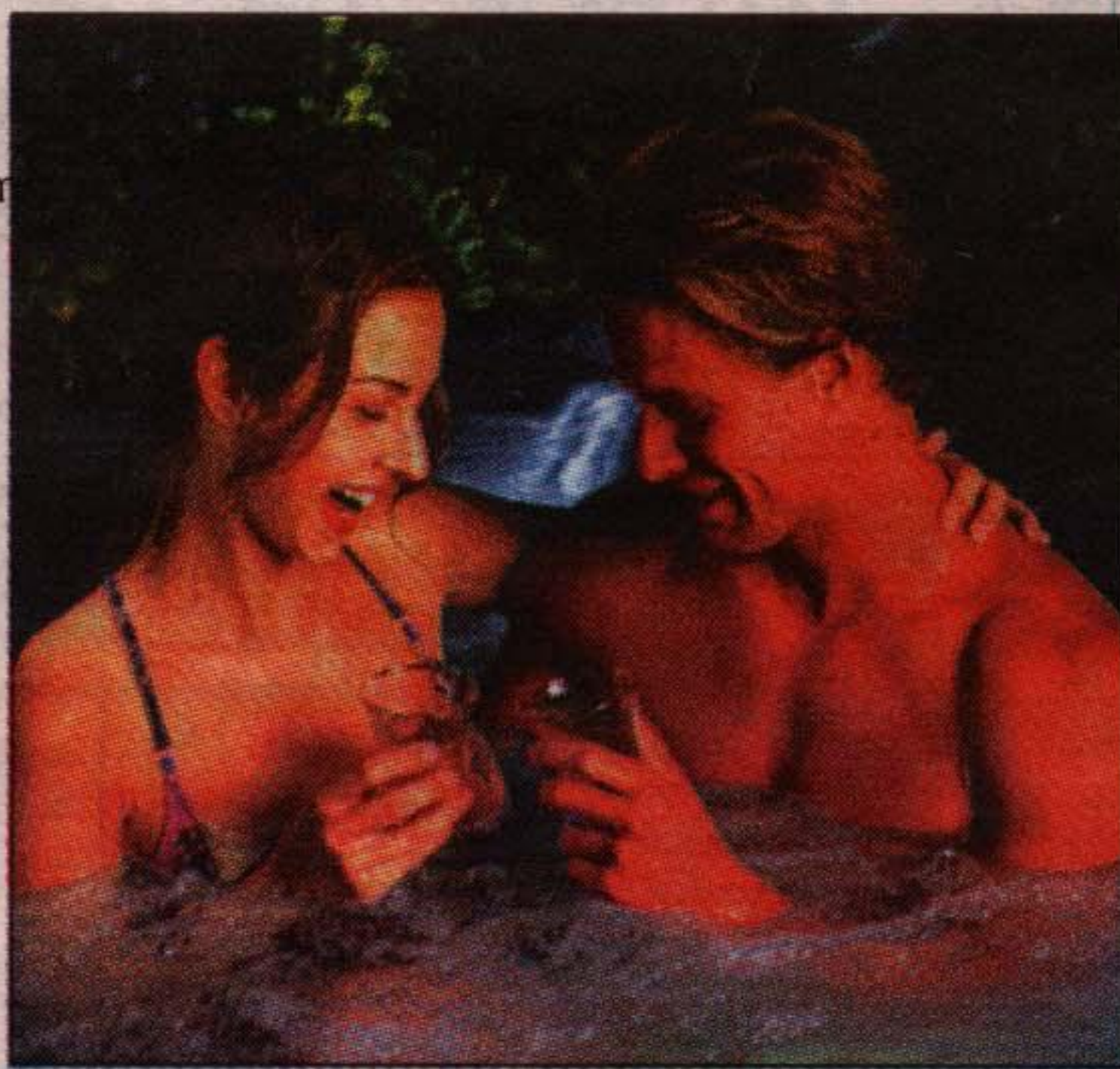
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5 PERSON  
DOUBLE LOUNGER



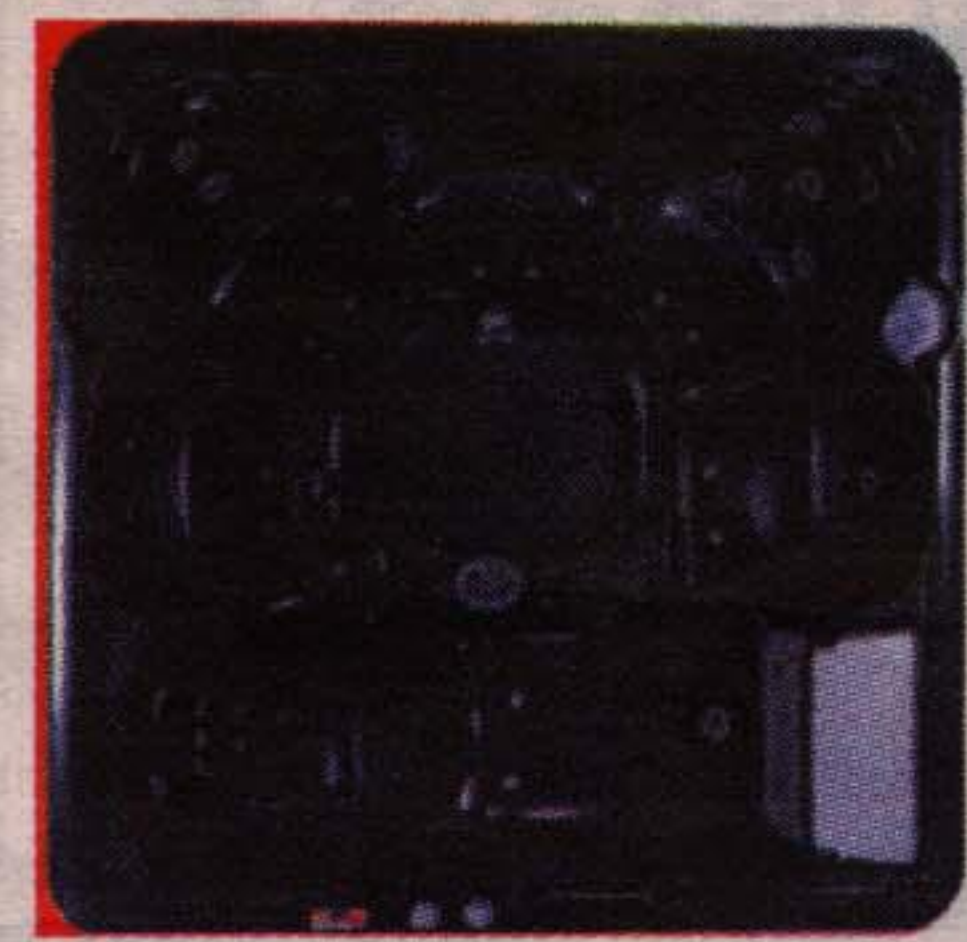
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