

# Dear John:



John Deere Answers Your Lawn and Garden Woes

## Vegetable Villification

**Dear John:** As a lawyer, I know a bad action when I see one. Last year, disease tried to defame my reputation as a vegetable gardener with a trumped up charge of neglect. How can I stop this injustice from happening again?

**Dear Slandered Sower:** Here's some counsel to help defend your reputation from further attack.

Healthy plants are far more able to fight disease than weak ones, so one of the best ways to throw the book at pests is to provide good growing conditions. The garden should be kept clean of plant refuse so disease spores and insect colonies can't multiply on the soil surface. Search for evidence of pests or disease under leaves and along stems, and you might be able to settle the case out of court.

If pests and disease continue to give your garden a heavy penalty, use pesticides as a last resort. The use of pesticides is a case where more isn't necessarily better — follow the label instructions carefully and spray on the undersides of the leaves where most pests lurk. A county extension agent can reach a verdict on which control is best—chemical or non-chemical—for your garden.

**Dear John:** I give up on seeding—I'm going to put in a sod lawn. Can you tell me what to do?

**Dear Sick of Seeding:** First, have a soil test done and add any necessary nutrients your soil may be lacking. Next, level and lightly

moisten the soil. Begin laying high-quality sod on a straight edge, such as a sidewalk or driveway, keeping the sod edges as close together as possible so they won't dry out.

After laying sod, use a water-filled roller to ensure good contact between roots and underlying soil. Finally, water the sod thoroughly to a depth of 12 to 16 cm and make sure the underlying soil is always moist. Once the sod begins to knit with the soil, you can return to a normal watering schedule of 2 cm of water per week.

**Dear John:** Can you give me some maintenance tips to ensure a long life for my riding mower?

**Dear Caring Cutter:** The best guide to taking care of your riding mower is its operator's manual. One area to pay particular attention to is the engine oil crankcase—check it after every four hours of use and fill it, if necessary. Also check the engine shroud, air intake screen, grille and side panels for grass clippings, twigs or other debris that can block air movement and cause the engine to overheat. And make sure the mower's tire pressure, transmission and battery fluids are at the proper levels.

In addition to weekly maintenance checks, sharpen the mower blades and replace the mower's oil and air filters after each 25 hours of use, or as recommended in the operator's manual.

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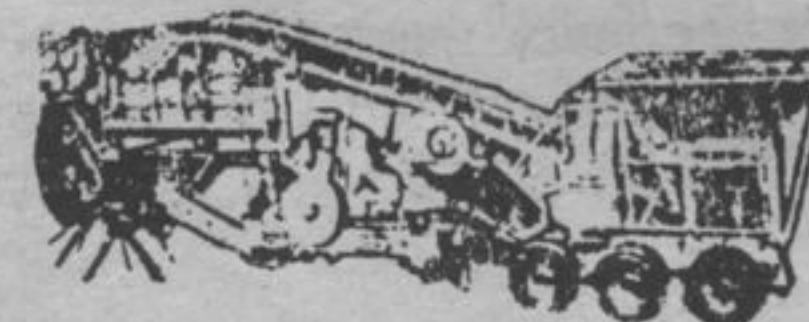
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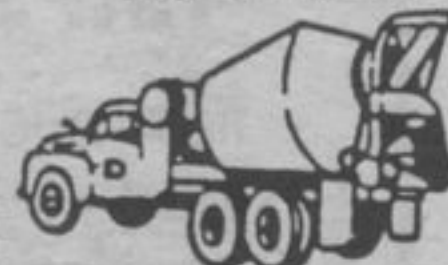
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