

Dear John:



John Deere Answers Your Lawn and Garden Woes

Growing Grass Gig

Dear John: I get the blues when summer ends and it's time to say goodbye to green, growing grass. What can I do to be sure my lawn will sing again when the dormant period is over?

Dear Funky Fall-Guy: Mowing habits might play a different tune, but the lyrics are still the same. Grass grows at a slower tempo in the fall, but should still be mowed so that no more than one-third of the grass blade is removed at each cutting. And roots are still in full swing — spreading out beneath the soil, storing food for dormant months.

For the final mowing, lower the cutting height to a deep baritone position — about 1/2 inch/1 cm lower than the usual setting. This will help remove excess leaves that can mat down the turf and harbor insects, rodents and disease.

Dear John: I like to keep my lawn equipment in tip-top condition. What should I do when I'm not going to use the mower for several months. Let it hibernate?

Dear Papa Bear: The most important storage tip is to drain the gasoline from the tank. Run the engine after emptying fuel to remove any gasoline left in the fuel line or carburetor. Next, change the oil to lubricate the engine and remove dirt and residue.

To prevent corrosion during inactive months, "pickle" the engine by removing the spark plug and pouring in one tablespoon of clean SAE 30 engine

oil. Then crank the engine twice to distribute the oil on the cylinder walls.

Inspect all visible parts for wear, breakage and damage and make any necessary repairs. It's also a good idea to paint over surface scratches to prevent rust.

For mowers with electric start, remove and clean the battery. Recharge it and store where it won't freeze.

Finally, clean out all debris from the blower and under the mower deck, lubricate the wheels and tighten any loose screws.

Dear John: Can you tell me what to do with my vegetable garden if we have an early frost this fall?

Dear Frost Frantic: Be prepared by covering frost-tender crops like tomatoes, peppers and eggplants with newspaper, mulch or burlap before nightfall if frost is expected. Support the coverings with stakes so they don't rest on plants, and remove them during the day. Pumpkins and squash should also be covered with a tarp. If a really hard frost is predicted, pick all the green tomatoes and ripen them inside at room temperature. Also harvest whatever melons, beans or cucumbers are ready. Leave immature vegetables on the vine and cover foliage with several layers of newspaper. Some vegetables — root crops and members of the cabbage family — actually improve with the arrival of cool weather.

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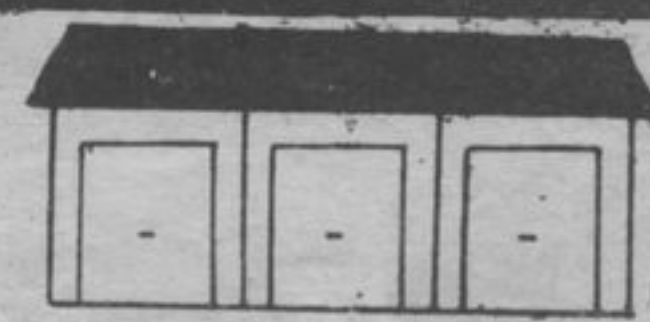
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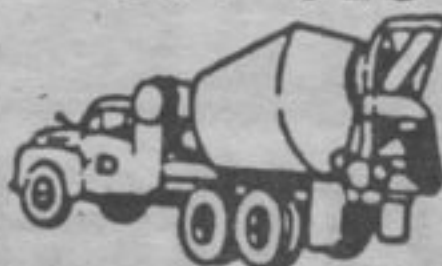


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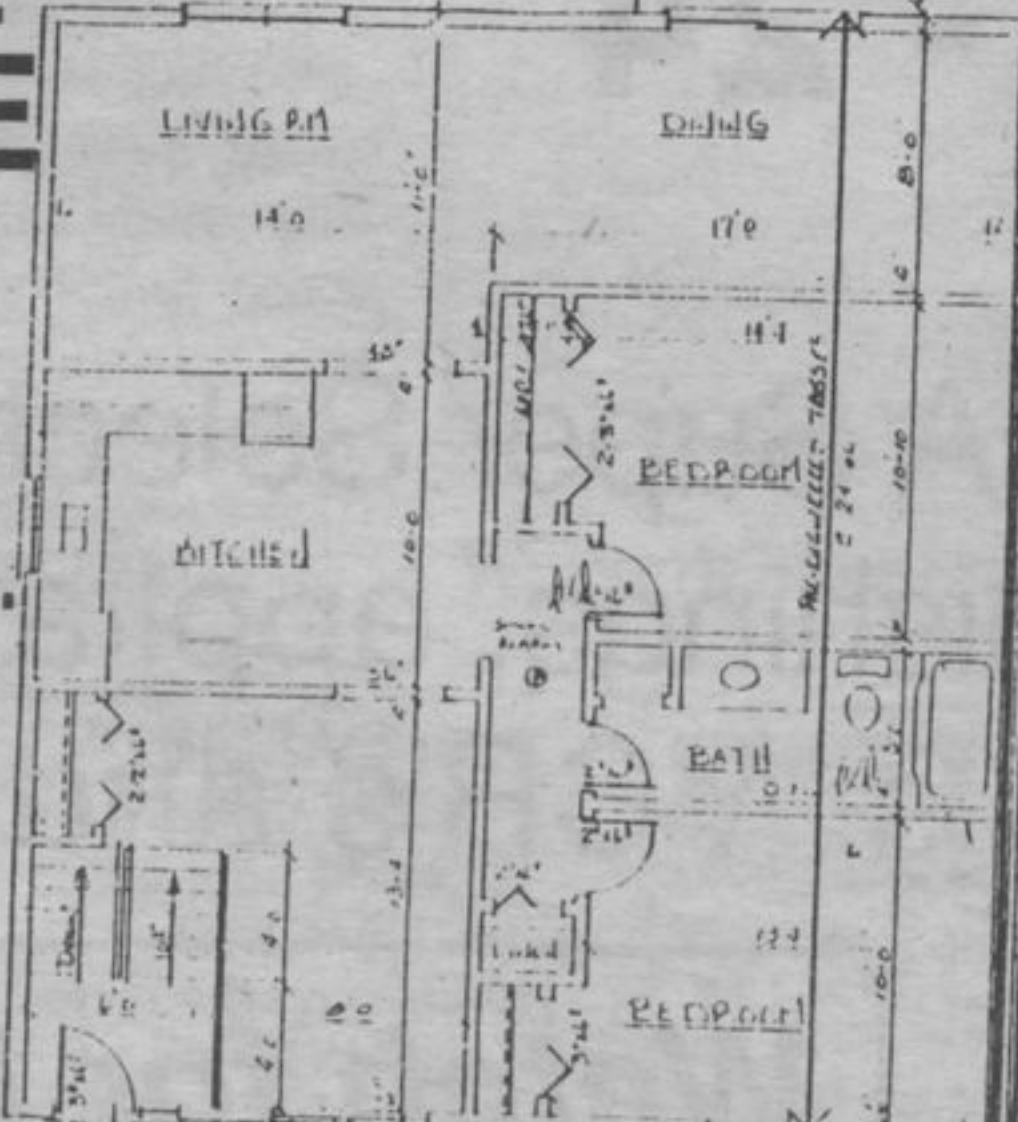
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