

Home and Garden '83

'Dollar spot' causes brown areas of grass

You inspect your lawn, perplexed. It's late spring, the temperature is moderate and there is plenty of moisture on the ground. Yet your lawn is pock-marked with a score of brown spots, 3 to 12 inches in diameter. In a short time, the number of spots increase, making entire sections of your lawn ugly.

What can you do? Or it's early fall, and the air is cool, say between 50 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Your lawn is closely mowed and moist under your feet. But the blades of grass in parts of your lawn — especially in the shade — are browning. Elongated circular spots, with purple or black borders, cripple each blade.

What can you do? The lawn disease described in the first case is "dollar spot." It is a common fungus that hits Bermuda grass and bentgrass. It also attacks Kentucky bluegrass, ryegrass and fescues.

The lawn disease in the second case is "melting out" or "leaf spot." Park and delta Kentucky bluegrass are common targets.

Like diseases that attack humans, lawn diseases are best rid by prevention:

1. Plant a variety of grass that best suits your local climate. Your nurseryman or county Extension Service agent may know the best type for your yard.
2. Mow at the proper height. Mowing too close causes "scalping." Grass suffers a severe shock when its height is reduced by more than one-third. Dull cutting edges shred grass, leaving your lawn with a gray cast the next day.
3. Fertilize at recommended rates and on a schedule that fits the growth cycle of your grass.
4. Water deeply and infrequently, only as the lawn turns from bright green to dull green, or when the grass under your foot-print doesn't spring back quickly. These are sure signs of water-starved grass.

5. Use chemical disease controls; but use them cautiously and sparingly.

Chemical fungicides are either systemic or non-systemic. Systemic fungicides are drawn in by grass and are usually more efficient. They have specific purposes, however, and will fight only certain diseases. Non-systemic fungicides work on the outside of grass — on its blades. They are best used as preventive disease controls, before your lawn turns bad.

For example, the two diseases described above, "dollar spot" and "melting out," can be prevented by the fungicide chlorothalonil. Some turf experts recommend using Ortho's chlorothalonil fungicide, Liquid Lawn Disease Control. It is also recommended for the diseases "brown patch," stem rust, "helminthosporium leaf spot" and "red thread."

There is no special skill required in applying fungicides, as long as commonsense precautions are followed.

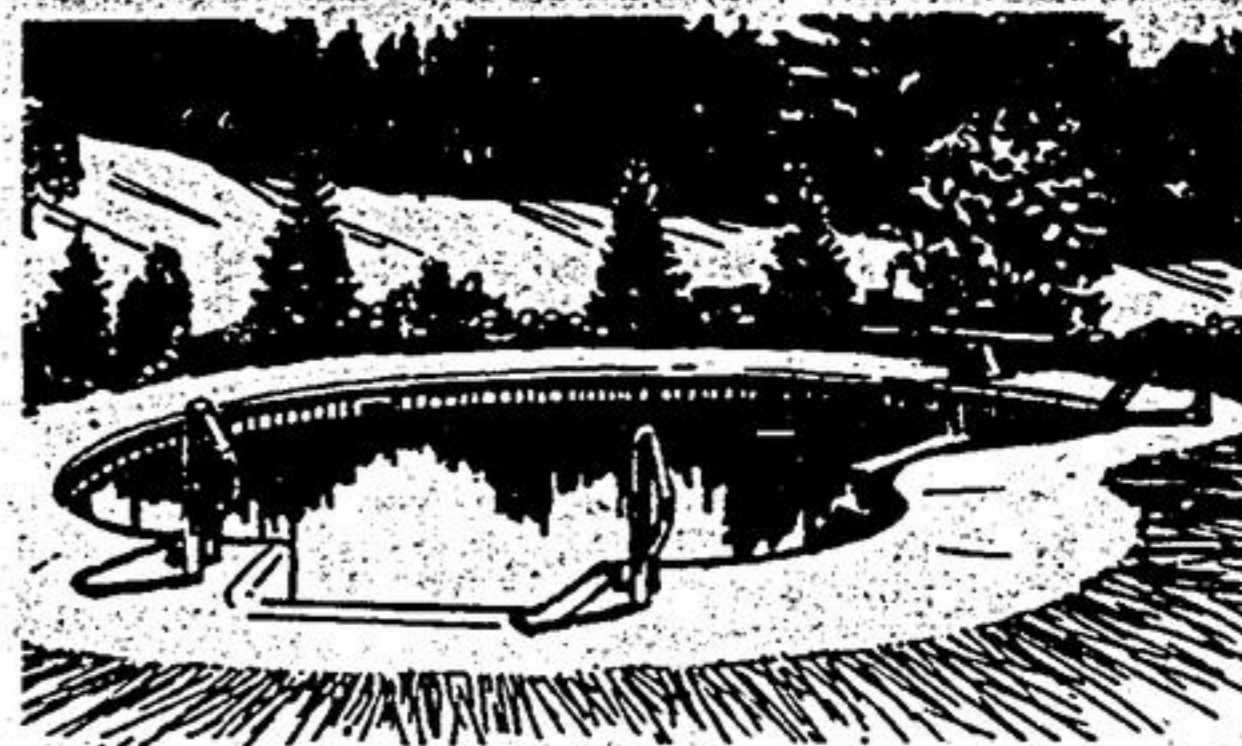
- Watch for the first signs of disease and begin spraying promptly. Lawn diseases are easier to prevent than to cure!
 - Read the label every time you spray or dust. Don't trust your memory, as a mistake can damage the lawn you're trying to protect.
 - Avoid spilling chemicals, especially concentrates, on your skin or clothing. Do not eat or smoke while spraying, and wash thoroughly with soap and water after each application.
 - Set aside a special set of mixing tools, measuring spoons and measuring cups. Don't use them to mix different chemicals.
 - Use left-over spray up on other plants as recommended on the label.
- Make all your efforts count with a simple disease prevention program, and keep your lawn the envy of the neighborhood.



Lush green lawns don't happen by accident. It takes hard work and careful application of fertilizer, herbicides and seed at the appropriate times during the year. Early spring is an ideal time to fertilize.

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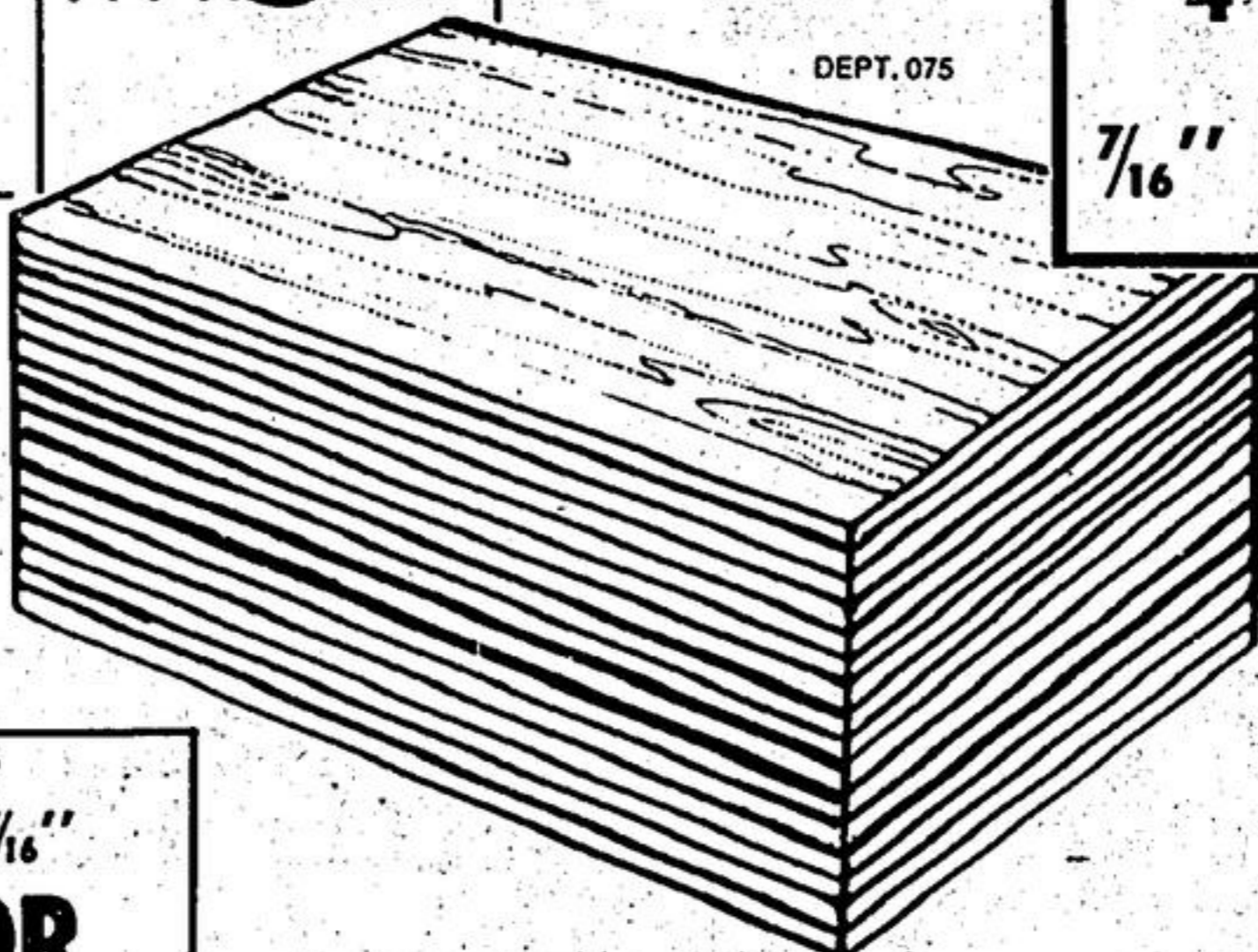
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