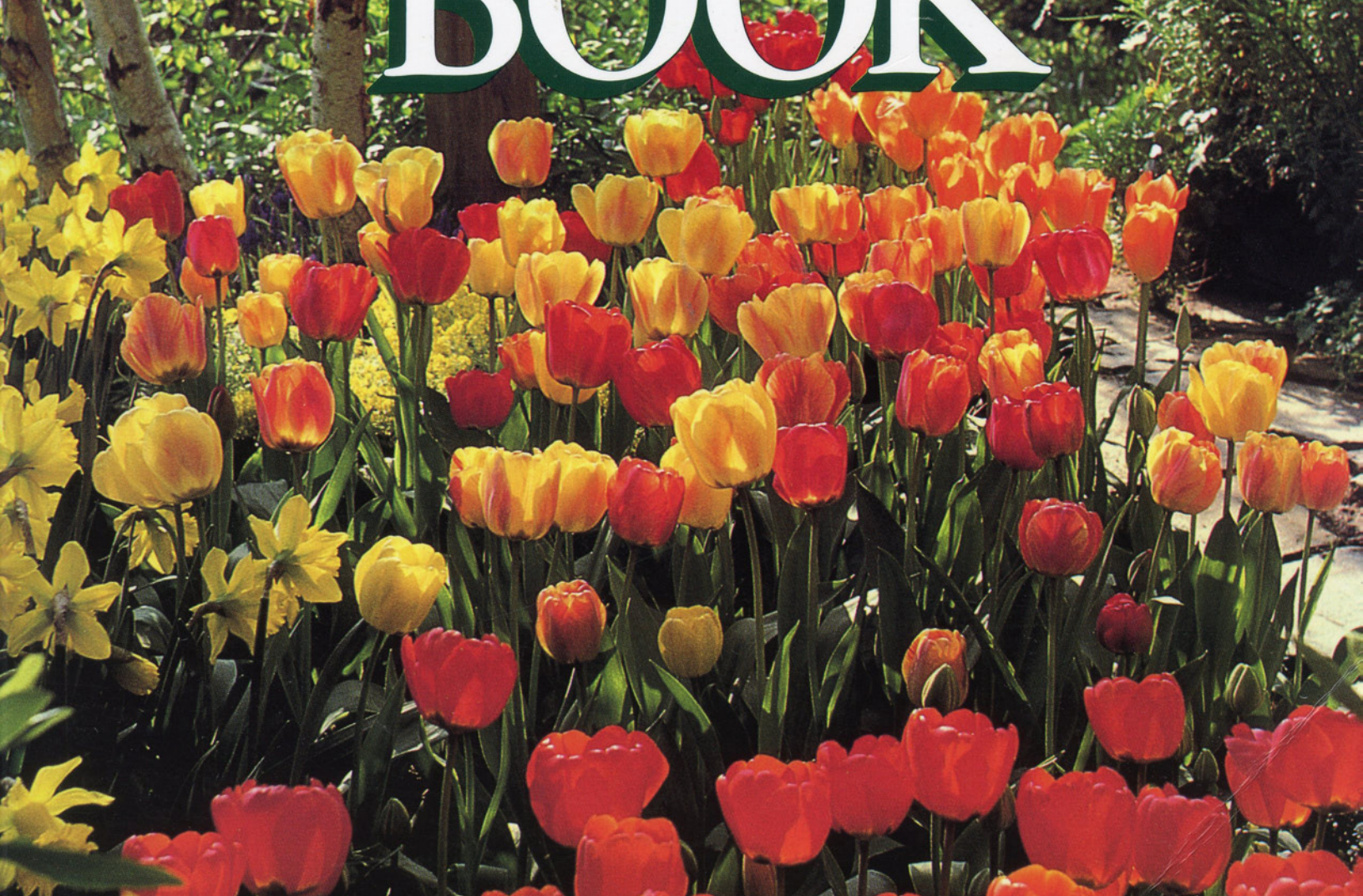


Better Homes and Gardens®

NEW GARDEN BOOK



REJUVENATING A LAWN

No matter how thin and bedraggled wear and tear or the weather leaves your lawn, it has tremendous comeback power. Proper care will quickly improve an existing lawn.

NEW LIFE FOR AN OLD LAWN

Fall is normally the best time for repair in the North; early spring is best in the South.

First remove all litter and leaves. Then get rid of the weeds—by hand or, if necessary, by repeated applications of herbicide. At the same time, feed the remaining grasses.

To reseed individual areas of your lawn, wait as directed after using herbicide. Then loosen the soil 4 to 6 inches deep and work in some balanced fertilizer. Rake the ground to smooth it, spread good-quality seed, and tamp it down. Apply a light mulch to keep heavy rains from washing away seed and to conserve moisture.

If the entire lawn looks bad, check the thatch. Some is good. It recycles plant tissues, adds organic fertilizer, and helps control weed growth. But if the thatch is more than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deep, it can harbor insects and diseases, prevent water and fertilizers from reaching the soil, and keep new grass from breaking through.

To make easy work of thatch removal, rent a power rake and set it deep enough to make small cuts in the soil. Otherwise, rake vigorously by hand. Add the thatch to your compost pile or use it as a mulch. Or use one of the thatch-removing fertilizers or sprays as directed on the product label. Soon your lawn will look new.

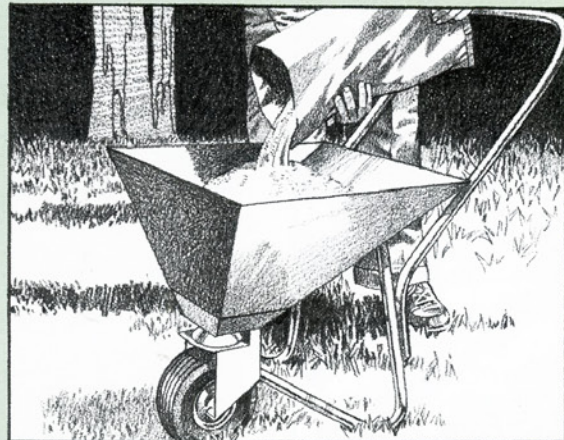
To give new life to your entire lawn, overseed right after removing thatch. Use good-quality seed, spreading it at about half the rate recommended for a new lawn—usually 1 or 2 pounds per 1,000 square feet.

In southern states you can plug warm-season grasses such as zoysia right into an existing lawn. They will eventually crowd out weeds and seeded grasses. Before plugging, water the lawn and mow low. After plugging, keep the soil just barely moist. The established grasses will shade

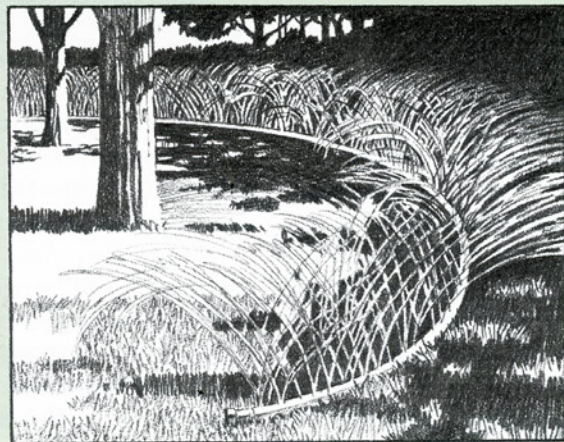
PERK UP YOUR LAWN



For extensive weeding, use weed killers, following instructions carefully—especially when using on a newly seeded lawn. Never spray on a windy day, and label the sprayer “For Herbicides Only.” When weeds are few, weed with a long-handled asparagus cutter.



Apply lawn food to the entire lawn when grass resumes. For even greening, apply half in one direction, half in a second pass at right angles. If you are reseeding, wait a week after feeding to reseed, delay feeding until you mow the new grass at least once.



After seeding, water, using a fine spray so seeds don't wash away. Keep the soil moist until new grass becomes established. Also water after removing thatch to help the lawn recover.

the new grass and help retain moisture. Do not mow until the new grass is 2 inches tall. Continue as for a new lawn (see pages 46–47).

LEVELING HUMPS AND HOLLOW'S

If unlevel parts of your yard—usually the result of earthworm activity or freezes and thaws—interfere with mowing or get boggy, it is time to take action.

In low spots, add a mix of weedless topsoil or sand and peat right on top of the grass to a depth of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Smooth it with an iron rake. Repeat twice a year until filled to the right level.

For deep depressions, slice back the existing sod in strips about 20 inches wide. Roll or fold the grass back, then fill the depressions with clean, rich soil. Smooth and tamp firmly, then replace the sod. Top-dress with $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of soil and water deeply.

To lower high spots, use a sharp, flat spade to remove inch-wide, 6-inch-deep wedges of turf the length of the mound. Repeat this at 10-inch-wide intervals. Soak the area thoroughly, then roll with a heavy roller to seal the spaces. Repeat in spring and fall until the hump disappears.

MAINTAINING A LAWN

Consistent care can become a pleasant habit and save extra work by preventing problems.

The nature of grass is to grow green at the top and turn brown at the base. By mowing often enough—usually at least weekly during active growth—you avoid cutting off all the existing green growth and encourage low, thick new growth. You also discourage weeds.

Check the charts on pages 50–51 for mowing heights for your kind of grass. As a general rule, do not cut the grass by more than one-third to one-half of its height. Get a mower you can handle and one with easy-to-change mowing levels. Keep the blades sharp. Mow a different direction every time. Mow shady spots less frequently and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch higher. In heat or drought, cut the whole yard higher to save moisture.



Light clippings usually can stay on the lawn. They decompose quickly and add nutrients and humus. But if the grass gets too tall, remove the clippings to the compost pile or use them as a mulch. If you've used herbicide on the lawn in the last six weeks, let the clippings sit for six more before using them for mulch.

Watering is useless unless it gets deep into the soil, usually 6 to 12 inches. Sandy soils need less water but more often. When grass turns from rich green to a bluish tint, loses resiliency so footprints remain, and grows much slower, it needs watering. Water only when needed, though, because excess moisture is harmful, too.

Feeding in the spring and fall with a good, slow-release lawn food will keep growth strong enough to crowd out weeds. The spring feeding should contain nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium in a ratio of 2:1:1 at a rate of about 4 pounds per 1,000 square feet. In the fall use a 1:2:2 mix to encourage healthy root growth during winter.

Edging and *trimming*, once endless chores, are now easy with power equipment. But you must use these tools carefully, especially around trees. Protect trees from damaging nicks by encircling them with mulch contained by edging.

Lawn care can be easy, with results that make outdoor living serene and luxurious. New grasses require fewer poisons and make better use of water. Too much grass, though, can drain natural resources and be tiresome to maintain, so grow grass only where you really want it.