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The Making of a Lawn

The elements that enter into the development of a good lawn are simple and easily understood, but are none the less important on that account. The failure to obtain good lawns arises from the fact that the soil is not of the proper kind or has not been carefully prepared, or that the wrong kind of grass seed has been used. Only soil which remains reasonably moist throughout the growing season will maintain a good lawn. Hard, dry, gravelly soil may produce a little green grass during the early part of the season, but it quickly turns brown in the middle of the summer. The best soil for lawns is a deep, porous clay loam. This should be plowed to a depth of a foot if possible and cultivated and graded until it is brought down to the proper slope or level. If it is necessary to do any large amount of grading in order to obtain the proper contour, care must be given to a natural appearance.

A lawn surface should not have the appearance of being put into place by artificial grading. All of its undulations, if there are any, should be easy and natural flowing lines, such as one finds in the land surfaces of a natural landscape.

It is a great mistake to sow the grass seed before the grading has been very carefully done and the ground put into the best possible condition for sowing the seed. It must be remembered that it is practically impossible to do anything in the way of improving the outline of the surface after the grass is once seeded. As freshly graded soil settles unevenly, it is well to give it plenty of time so that the final surface will not be full of irregularities. If grading is done late in the fall, it is sure to develop irregularities during the winter and it will require some additional surfacing to get the lawn into proper shape in the spring. The best tools for this purpose are the disc, acme harrow, split-log drag and a plank drag for the final smoothing. If the soil is too heavy to get a good seed bed, as is often the case around a building where excavations have been made, it becomes necessary to cover the ground over with two or three inches of fine surface soil.

The grass can be seeded during the latter part of October, after there is no chance of its germinating, or else as early in the spring as the ground can be gotten into shape. In order to keep down the growth of weeds it will be necessary to use a much greater amount of grass seed than is used in seeding field crops. The amount seeded per acre is usually about sixty pounds of such varieties as the Red Top and Kentucky blue grass. A somewhat heavier seeding than this will give equally as good, if not better, results. For general lawn purposes we consider a mixture of Blue grass and Red Top as good as anything that can be used. Where the lawn cannot be watered from the first, it is well to put in a generous sprinkling of timothy. For an acre of ground one would want in this case twenty-five or thirty pounds each of blue grass and Red Top and about six pounds of timothy. White clover can also be added if one desires. It is common practice to sow the seed broadcast and drag it in by going over the ground two or three times so that the seed will be thoroughly incorporated with the soil. After this the ground should be rolled so as to hasten germination. If there is danger of the soil drifting it can be covered with straw or fresh, straw manure after seeding. This should be removed just as soon as the seed begins to germinate.

It frequently happens that the first year's stand is not good over the entire area; there will be thin patches and one will be tempted to plow it up and start over again. It is much better in this case to simply rake in more grass seed in the early fall or late in the spring, and keep this up until it has a good turf over the whole surface.

The question often comes up whether or not to start mowing grass upon the native prairie sod. This can be done very readily, and if the native sod has about the right elevation and the slope of the required lawn, it should not be disturbed. Instead blue grass seed should be scattered over the surface in the fall and at the same time about one inch of good garden soil applied, raking it down with the back of the rake. The blue grass will start here and there and eventually will take possession of the entire lawn, as all of the turf-making grasses will sooner or later drive out the bunch grasses. It is not advisable to clip the grass too soon the first season, nor to keep it cut too short. Unless one is very particular about the appearance of his lawn, it is just as well to leave the first year's seeding without any cutting at all. This will strengthen the grass and will tend to keep annual weeds from starting.

Walks in the lawn should be so arranged so there will be no temptation to tramp across the lawn. It is impossible for a lawn to have a rich, neat appearance if there are bare spots here and there across the surface.

It is quite important to have a good lawn in the back yard as in the front. Because of the temptation to tramp promiscuously over the back yard and let it run insensibly in the barnyard.

Save Money -- But Get Quality

Unfortunately we reserved too much nursery stock for the local trade this spring. We are still offering a complete line of Trees, Shrubs and Plants, both Fruiting and Ornamental. It must be disposed of, no matter what the loss, our prices will hardly cover the cost of digging and handling.

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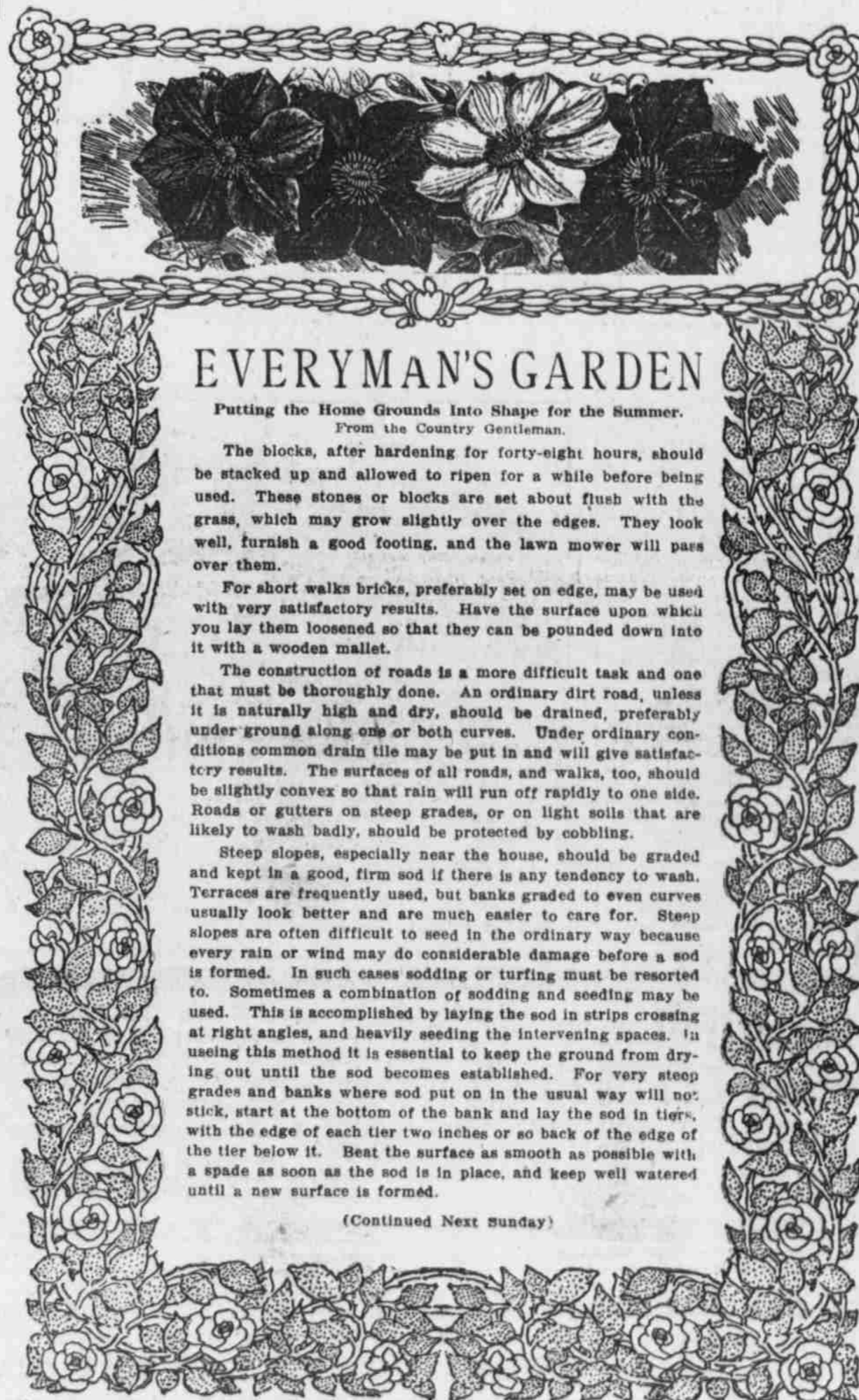
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EVERYMAN'S GARDEN

Putting the Home Grounds into Shape for the Summer.
From the Country Gentleman.

The blocks, after hardening for forty-eight hours, should be stacked up and allowed to ripen for a while before being used. These stones or blocks are set about flush with the grass, which may grow slightly over the edges. They look well, furnish a good footing, and the lawn mower will pass over them.

For short walks bricks, preferably set on edge, may be used with very satisfactory results. Have the surface upon which you lay them loosened so that they can be pounded down into it with a wooden mallet.

The construction of roads is a more difficult task and one that must be thoroughly done. An ordinary dirt road, unless it is naturally high and dry, should be drained, preferably under ground along one or both curves. Under ordinary conditions common drain tile may be put in and will give satisfactory results. The surfaces of all roads, and walks, too, should be slightly convex so that rain will run off rapidly to one side. Roads or gutters on steep grades, or on light soils that are likely to wash badly, should be protected by cobbling.

Steep slopes, especially near the house, should be graded and kept in a good, firm sod if there is any tendency to wash. Terraces are frequently used, but banks graded to even curves usually look better and are much easier to care for. Steep slopes are often difficult to seed in the ordinary way because every rain or wind may do considerable damage before a sod is formed. In such cases sodding or turfing must be resorted to. Sometimes a combination of sodding and seeding may be used. This is accomplished by laying the sod in strips crossing at right angles, and heavily seeding the intervening spaces. In using this method it is essential to keep the ground from drying out until the sod becomes established. For very steep grades and banks where sod put on in the usual way will not stick, start at the bottom of the bank and lay the sod in tiers, with the edge of each tier two inches or so back of the edge of the tier below it. Beat the surface as smooth as possible with a spade as soon as the sod is in place, and keep well watered until a new surface is formed.

(Continued Next Sunday)



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