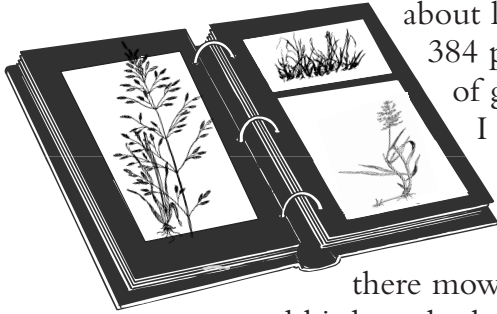


INTRODUCTION

Getting to Know Lawns

Howdy, lawn lads and lassies, and welcome to the wonderful world of grassies! It doesn't matter if you're green to the lawn scene or a seasoned sodmaster from way back when, I'm here to give you the inside scoop on how to get the most out of that carpet of green that surrounds your home.

A Whole Book about Lawns?!



When I told some of my friends I was working on a book about lawns, they asked, “How can you possibly fill 384 pages talking about a bunch of boring blades of grass?!” My answer is: Quite easily! You see, I *love* lawns — there’s far more to them than meets the eye.

For one thing, all lawns are not created equal. I’m sure you know someone who’s out there mowing and feeding his lawn every other day — and his lawn looks better than the putting greens at the local golf course. Then again, just around the corner is the lawn that gets mowed about once a year — only one cut above the plot in front of the old, abandoned house down by the railroad tracks! The moral of this story is that it takes all kinds of people to make the world go ’round — and the grass grow green. But whatever your style is, and no matter how much you know, there’s always room for improvement. Hey, I’ve been at this for 40+ years, and I still learn new tricks every day!

Did You Know?

Wearing golf shoes or aerating lawn sandals when mowing your yard can put your grass on par with the best around. (See pages 9 and 112 and you’ll find out why.)

Positively Pleasing Payoffs

Now, most folks would probably agree that growing a gorgeous green lawn around their homes is a terrific idea. I wouldn’t be surprised if you already picture your lawn as a living, wall-to-wall carpet, bringing a certain amount of character, order, texture, and color to your yard. But, hey, that’s not just a bunch of fluff! If you’re a

practical person like I am, you’ll quickly see that a well-cared-for lawn is less likely to be brought to its knees by bugs and disease. And it not only looks terrific, but a great lawn increases your property value and improves the looks of the neighborhood. Plus, it’s so nice to come home to. Let me show you what I mean.

First Impressions Count

As my Grandma Putt always said, you never get a second chance to make a first impression, and that's especially true when it comes to your lawn. After all, it's the first thing folks see when they drive up to your house.

If your lawn features a motley assortment of grasses, a rampaging weed population, and overgrown edges, it's a real eyesore. But that's not all. An unkempt lawn is also an open invitation to nasty bugs and fast-spreading diseases, all of which just make the lawn look worse.

But when your lawn is lush, green, and healthy, it's not only beautiful all on its own, it also provides the perfect backdrop for trees, shrubs, flowers, and other dazzling landscape features. And all of this sets your house off to a "T", making it look like a masterpiece — safe, beautiful, *and* valuable.

Grow for the Green

Yup, it's true! A well-cared-for lawn actually increases your property value. If you're thinking of selling your home, there's nothing like gorgeous green grass to grab the interest of potential buyers. A beautiful lawn says that here's a person who not only lovingly works on his yard, but he also takes special care of the inside of his home. Realtors call this "curb appeal."

Tax Facts

And there's another hidden bonus: Great-looking landscaping raises the value of your property, *without* increasing your property tax. When figuring out how much in taxes you owe, assessors consider additions like a new bedroom, a third bathroom, a garage, and a deck, but they skip over landscaping amenities. Talk about more bang for your buck — it doesn't get any better than this!

Did You Know?

In one single growing season, a half-acre of lawn produces more than 5,500 pounds of grass clippings.



The Environmental Benefits

Lawns also do their part to help the environment — and us. Without getting into too much detail, all green plants, grass included, produce oxygen from carbon dioxide during photosynthesis. (Remember Biology 101?) They get this carbon dioxide as a waste product when we exhale.

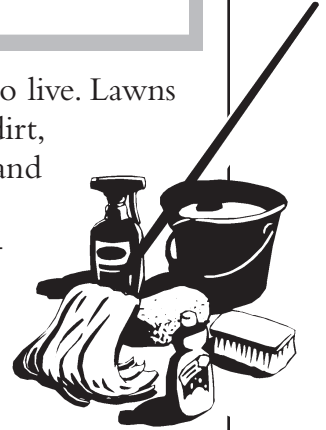
Lawns step in, absorb carbon dioxide from the air, and convert it to the oxygen we

need in order to live. Lawns also trap dust, dirt, and pollution, and they provide a strong root system to fight soil erosion.



Jerry Baker Says

“So a healthy lawn helps create a healthy environment, and that’s good for everyone.”



Did You Know?



There’s a microscopic municipality sprawling over your lawn:

- One square inch of lawn typically houses six grass plants.
- One square foot provides space for 850 grass plants.

Gets You Grinnin’

Believe it or not, a well-kept lawn can even boost your outlook on life. A beautiful, eye-pleasing yard will put a smile on your face and a feeling of contentment in your soul — lickety split! Picture this: It’s a lazy Saturday afternoon in July. The sun is shining, the air is balmy, and the grass is freshly mowed. It’s the perfect time to invite the neighbors over for a cookout and a picnic, or maybe you’d like to pitch a tent and camp out in the backyard with your 8 year old. You could also put that gorgeous green grass to the test and set up a game of croquet. Or maybe you’d just like to kick off your shoes and tickle your toes, then curl up with a good book and read — and snooze — in the hammock. The choice is yours — enjoy!



A Giant Grass Garden

By now, you've probably guessed that lawns are one of the things in life that I like the most. I look at it this way: The healthiest lawns I've seen are those whose "owners" have treated them with as much care and attention as some folks give their flower or vegetable gardens. Fair enough, you say. But how do I really get this dream lawn? Is it magic? Does it take a lot of hard work? Do I have to be a genius to figure it out? What's really the scoop?!

Well, let me put it this way: Lawn care's no mystery if you know what to do and when to do it. And that's where I come in. You see, I've been working hard in the yard for the past 40+ years or so, coming up with a huge array of tips, tricks, and tonics that make lawn care a snap! I'm going to share my lifetime of lawn know-how and experience with you in this book.



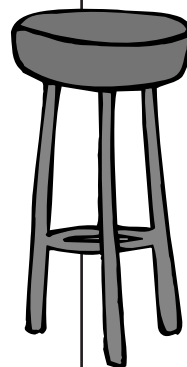
Jerry Baker Says

"If you really stop and think about it, a lawn is just a giant garden. But instead of yielding a bumper crop of whopper tomatoes or row upon row of gorgeous roses, a lawn generates zillions of blades of green grass."

The Three-Legged Stool of Lawn Care

We're going to start off in Part I with some terrific tips about what I like to call the three-legged stool of lawn care: feeding, mowing, and watering. Sure, it takes a little bit of effort to properly mow, trim, fertilize, and water your lawn, but you don't have to become a lawn pawn or a slave to sod. No siree! If you follow my commonsense guidelines, I guarantee that your lawn will make others green with envy!

Feeding your lawn the right way at the right time with the right ingredients is the first step to a lush lawn. Chapter 2 is all about "chow" time, and it's jam-packed with my world-famous tonics for green grass success. You'll find everything you need to keep your lawn well fed year



Did You Know?

A single winter rye plant is capable of producing 387 miles of roots in just 1.8 cubic feet of soil.

'round — from tonics that get your lawn off to a great start in the spring, to those that keep it purring right along through the summer until it's time to put your lawn "to bed" for the winter.

When it comes time to mow, my tips will keep you a big cut above the average Joe. Whatever kind of lawn-mower you choose to use, if you follow my basic techniques, your lawn will be a whole lot healthier for it. Just take a peek at Chapter 4 for the rundown on what's what in lawn mowers and all you've ever wanted to know about mowing.

The same goes for watering, which is the third leg of that critical three-legged stool of lawn care. In Chapter 5, we'll discuss the ins and outs of proper watering. You'll learn how to do it, as well as what's best for the kind of grass and the kind of climate you have in your own backyard.

We Can't Be Good All of the Time

I hate to admit it, but even the best turfmasters sometimes get hit with problems in our lawns. You might give your lawn the tenderest loving care it needs, and yet it can still get damaged by weather, disease, or insect and animal pests

(both the two-legged and the four-legged varieties!). If your Aunt Edna backs her car right into the softest, wettest part of your lawn, leaving big tire tracks in her

wake, or if a battalion of moles decides to camp out in your yard, check out Chapters 7 and 8 in Part II for the lowdown on how to get your lawn back into tip-top shape. Then we'll move on to the other bad guys, showing you how to get the bead on weeds (Chapter 10), drub the grubs, and make fleas flee (Chapters 11 and 12). If you follow the quick-and-easy steps I outline in this section, you'll no longer shake in your boots at the first sign of trouble.



Getting Down to Basics

Up to this point, we've covered everything you need to know to make sure that the greenest grass on the block ends up on your side of the fence. But if you don't have a lawn yet, what do you do? Well, that's what Part III is all about. The first thing I want you to know is how to understand and improve your soil (that's in Chapter 13). You'll then discover my tricks for putting in a new lawn, step-by-step, whether you do it by sowing seed or by laying sod.

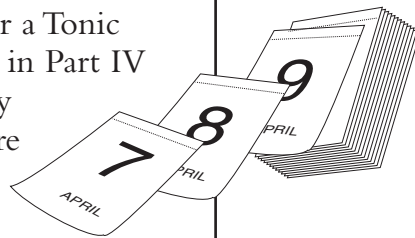


You'll also learn how to make the most of your soil by planting the kinds of grasses that will grow best in it. The long and the short of it is that grass planted in the wrong place is more prone to disease, insects, and weeds. Check out my suggestions for the best grasses for *your* conditions, all listed and described in Chapter 15.

And if you ever get to a point where you want to cut back on the size of your lawn, I've got lots of handy hints about life beyond lawns, including everything from ground covers to gravel, decks, and patios to meadows full of native plants or wildflowers. After all, even for the biggest grass fanatics among us, there's a whole lot more to life than lawn care!

The World Goes 'Round and 'Round

And last, but certainly not least, I've put together a Tonic summary section and special lawn-care calendar in Part IV of this book. The calendar gives advice season by season, with special notes for you, whether you're growing warm-season or cool-season grasses, or a mixture of both. Flip to this calendar regularly throughout the year and you'll know exactly what to do and *when* to do it.



Did You Know?

A can of beer and a little dish of soap make a terrific twosome for whatever ails your lawn. (See page 324-26 and you'll learn why.)



The Tonic summary brings all of my famous lawn tonics together in one place to use as a handy reference whenever you get the urge to work on your lawn. I guarantee that you'll be dog-earring these pages as you refer to them again and again and again.



Whew! As you can see, we've got a lot of ground to cover (you didn't think that I'd lost my penchant for bad puns, did you?), and 384 pages doesn't look like so much after all, does it? Writing this book was really a labor of love, which is how I want you to think of lawn care. Sure, it's going to take a little work, but as my Grandma Putt always said, nothin's worth doin' without doin' it right. So, I think that you'll find a *little* bit of work done at the right time will save you a *lot* of work in the long run and pay off big with a terrific new lawn you'll be button-bursting proud of.

Well, now that I've gotten you thinking about how terrific it will be to have the lawn of your dreams on your side of the fence, it's time to get to the heart of the matter — your lawn and how to care for it. So grab a nice tall, cold one, and turn the page!

