

TEE SHOTS



by the Editor

Perhaps I dreamed it. At any rate, it was 1st April before noon when the letter plopped on to my mat. It came from a body which called itself the IRTS. I gathered this had something to do with research into turf science and that one of their representatives had called to look at my lawn while I was away and wanted to send me his sympathy

“The trouble is,” he said, “it is too big. But fortunately modern techniques can ease your task more than you might wot of.”

I was puzzled by this “wot of” In the first place, I was taught never to end my sentences with a preposition and in the second place — “wot” — well, I ask you. But I read on.

He thought a good deal of my daisies which, he said, if not cut too short, would give the grass an agreeable mediaeval appearance. (I now began to see the point of his “wot”.) I was at all costs to avoid any preparations containing the Sulphates of Ammonia or Iron which tended to blacken and destroy the pretty plants.

He also took a good view of my moss. “While,” he said, “there may be certain mercurised products designed to discourage the elegant fern-like fronds of *Polytrichum*, there can be no doubt that the basic conditions of poverty, bad drainage, compaction and, what have you (it seemed to me I had the lot already),

Continued on pages 10 and 11

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are those best suited to your idle circumstances.” He therefore advised trampling the turf while the surface was wet as a temporary remedy, but he thought that one of those hopping machines, saying “Ouf-Plonk” used by contractors in an endeavour to get back into the trench the same amount of soil that they took out, would in the long run be a sound investment. Steam rollers, he opined, were now difficult because non-turf enthusiasts were acquiring them as garden ornaments rather than essential equipment. In any case, the shrubbery tended to suffer if the driver failed to wind his little steering-wheel quickly enough.

There followed a good deal of technical advice with which I will not bore you beyond the odd quotation: “Mowing once a month at 3/16 in. will tend to reduce vigour and increase deck-chair time” A useful point, I thought. “Worm casts and mole-hills if suitably flattened with a blunt instrument will eventually produce a smooth, earth-like surface on which grass will find it difficult to compete with the more desirable weeds” Heavy top-dressing with a suitable clay soil would assist this condition.

Watering was to be restricted to the months of December and January, when the frozen droplets, besides reflecting the winter sun, would help to do the few remaining grass blades a bit of no good.

There was a useful hint on fertilising. Sodium Nitrate or Nitro Chalk, applied at 6 oz. per square yard in early September, had generally been shown to produce conspicuous bare patches before October was out and with careful neglect these

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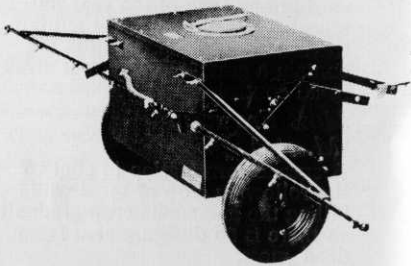
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might go right through the following year. This rate of application, provided the material was not too evenly spread, would also scorch the remaining sward, so that I could put the mower away for a full year.

The same goal could be reached if cubes of bread soaked in a 10·15 10 solution of rum, brown sugar and water were put out at night from early Spring onwards. The passions of the grubs of *Tipula oleracea* and related species became inflamed by the sweet alcoholic bait and these thick-skinned but intensely romantic creatures multiplied rapidly at the expense of the grass roots.

Aeration had been advised in the past by the older generation of lawn expert but those, like the writer, who were opposed to blood sports, had proved that not only leather-jackets, even when intoxicated by one thing and another, but also earthworms and cockchafer grubs could suffer as the cold steel passed through them. There had, consequently, been a popular revulsion of feeling against this cruel practice and one firm specialising in turf-piercing equipment had sent all its old customers a set of soft rubber tines, guaranteed to be humane, and switched its production to wind-screen washers.

By this time I began to wonder (having been properly brought up) what he was selling. It turned out to be typewriters — The Instant Typewriter Replacement Service — the quick brown fox jumped over the lazy lawn owner. What ever happened to the dog?



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