

Introduction

WHAT'S MORE AMERICAN than apple pie? A lush, green, toe-ticklin' lawn—that's what! Well, friends, whether you're starting a brand-new lawn, reviving one that's seen better days, or simply wanting to put a little more pep into your home ground, you've come to the right place. In this book, I'll show you how to turn any old yard into a regular field of dreams.

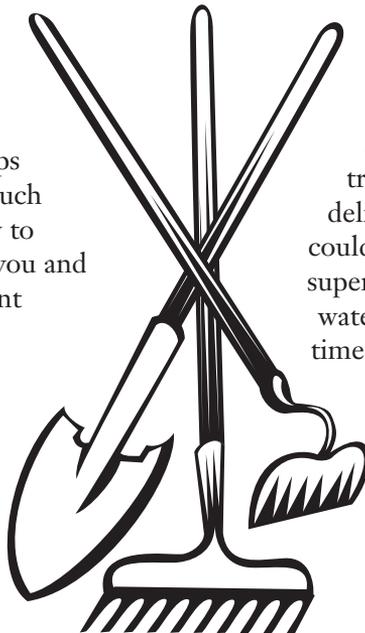
And, speaking of dreams, that's exactly where we'll start off: planning your perfect green scene. Now, don't panic—I know that a lot of home-landscaping books make the process sound so complicated that only Thomas Jefferson himself could do the job. But I'm here to tell you it just ain't so! In Chapter 1, you'll find tons of terrific tips to help you decide just how much lawn you really want, and how to lay it out in a way that'll give you and your family the most enjoyment with the least possible hassle.

Chapter 2 is about grass in all its great green glory. I'll give you a fast, fun lesson in turf grass anatomy, and we'll have a look-see at the whole roster of types and varieties, from enduring Hall

of Famers to today's superstars. You'll learn which ones will perform like champs in your yard, no matter where you live in this gorgeous land of ours.

Then, in Chapters 3 and 4, you'll find everything you need to know to get a new lawn growing on the right root, or put a tattered, battered one on the road to recovery. I'll share my secrets for getting rid of old grass and weeds, leveling and grading your site, improving drainage, and turning ordinary dirt into rich, root-pleasing soil. I'll even hand you some helpful hints on hiring landscaping professionals (just in case you'd rather let someone else do the heavy lifting).

The next three chapters are chock-full of my tips, tricks, and tonics to help you deliver the best TLC a lawn could ever ask for. I'll lay out my super-simple routine for feeding, watering, and mowing at the right times, in the right way, and with the right equipment. And, because the seasons come and go at different times in our vast and varied country, I've made Chapter 8 your All-American Lawn-Care Calendar. Just by glancing at its pages, you'll

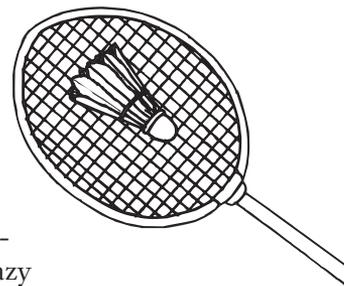


know when to perform any chore, from sowing the first seeds of spring to putting your landscape to bed for the winter.

It's a sad fact of lawn life that, no matter how careful you are, trouble can gallop in like a gang of ornery outlaws gunnin' for John Wayne. Well, fear not, pardner! Whether you're facing a showdown with pesky pests, dastardly diseases, wicked weeds, or Mother Nature herself, Chapters 9 through 12 will give you a whole arsenal of ammo for your six-shooter. But what happens when the unintentional "villain" is you (or maybe the local road crew)? No problem! Just turn to Chapter 13 for my surefire strategy for battling accidental mishaps ranging from oil spills and fertilizer overdoses to herbicide and road-salt damage.



But enough about the serious stuff! Everybody knows that the all-American lawn is more than just a pretty piece of turf—it's also a play-ground. So, in Chapter 14, we'll look at a whole bunch of favorite Yankee pastimes. Whether your idea of first-class fun is a cutthroat croquet tournament, a lazy game of badminton, or a putting session on your own private green, you'll learn how to set the stage for action—and keep your grass looking great at the same time.



Finally, as strange as it may seem in a book about lawns, we'll turn our attention away from turf grass and consider some dandy alternatives. How come? Well, if you're like most of the folks I hear from, you've got some places in your yard where, no matter what you do, grass simply refuses to thrive. Or you're hankerin' to add a little pizzazz to your smooth, green carpet. Then again, maybe you'd simply prefer to spend less time and money on your lawn, and more on life's other pleasures—like loadin' up the old jalopy and headin' out to explore the U.S.A. That's why I've crammed a galaxy of great ideas into Chapter 15, including no-mow ornamental grasses and groundcovers, unthirsty native plants, and all-but-no-care decks, patios, and water features.

So what are we waiting for? Let's hoist the flag and start the green grass parade for our all-American lawns!