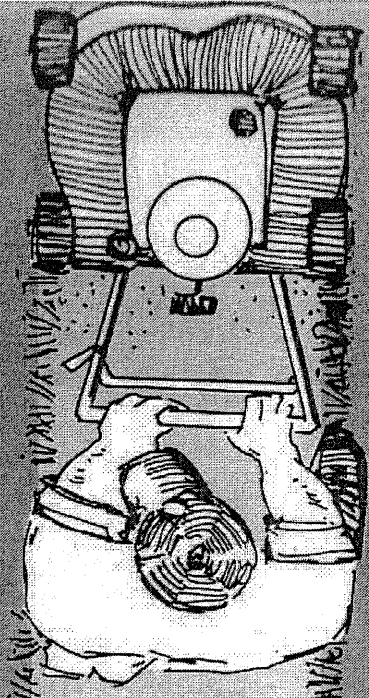


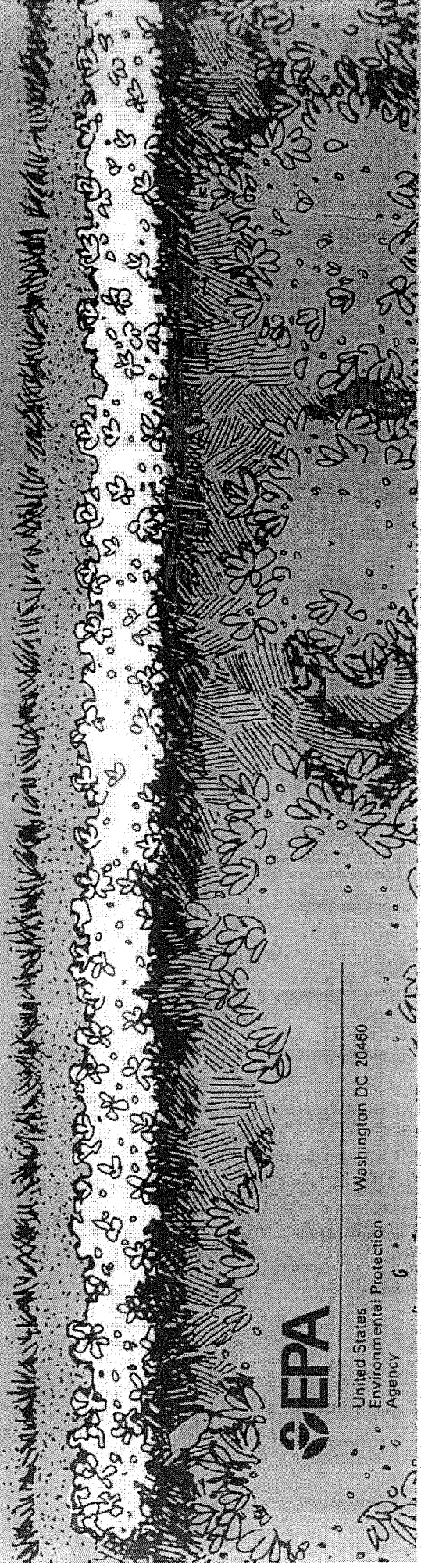
10. Healthy Lawn Healthy Environment



Healthy Lawn

Healthy Environment

Caring for Your Lawn in an Environmentally Friendly Way



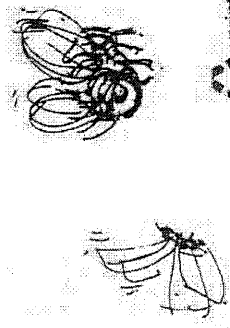
United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Washington DC 20460

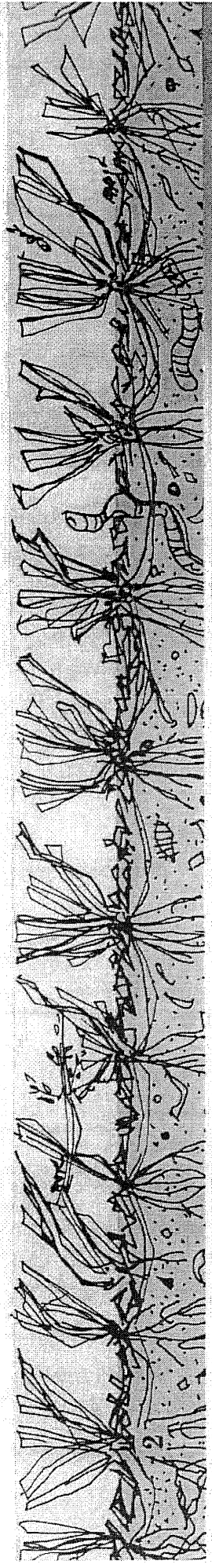
HEALTHY LAWN, HEALTHY

Caring for Your Lawn in an Environmentally Friendly Way

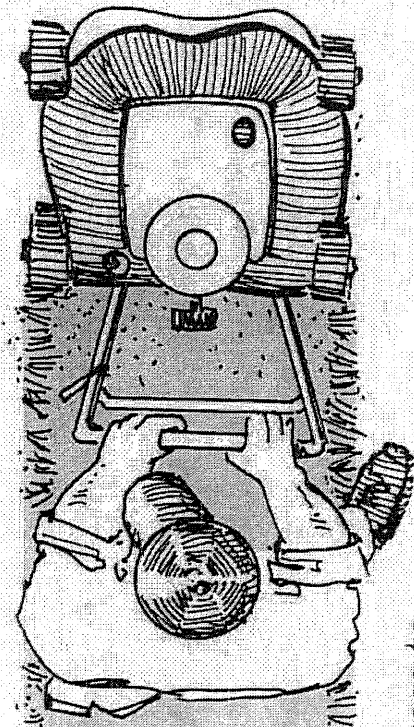
Picture a healthy green lawn: perfect for lounging, great for ball games and cookouts, a real asset to your home. But did you know that your lawn—and how you take care of it—can also help the environment? 🌸 Healthy grass provides feeding ground for birds, who find it a rich source of insects, worms, and other food. Thick grass prevents soil erosion, filters contaminants from rainwater, and absorbs many types of airborne pollutants, like dust and soot. Grass is also highly efficient at converting carbon dioxide to oxygen, a process that helps clean the air. 🌸 Caring for your lawn properly can both enhance its appearance and contribute to its environmental benefits. You don't have to be an expert to grow a healthy lawn. Just keep in mind that the secret



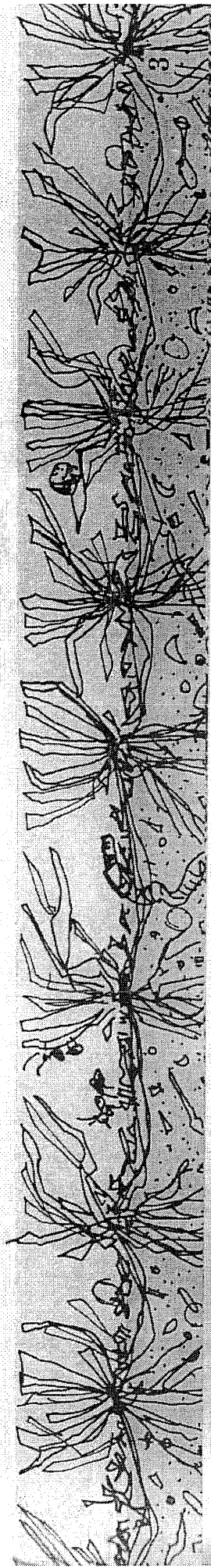
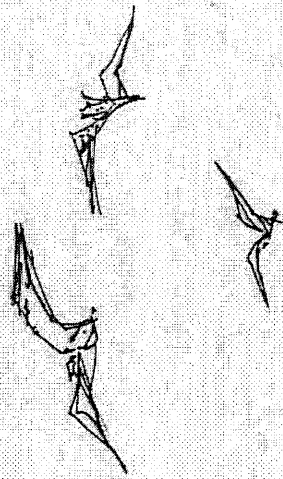
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ENVIRONMENT



is to work with nature. This means creating conditions for grass to thrive and resist damage from weeds, disease, and insect pests. It means setting realistic goals for your lawn, whether you or a professional lawn care service will be doing the work. And if you choose to use pesticides, it means using them with care so as to get the most benefit and reduce any risks. 🌸 Caring for your lawn in an environmentally sensible way can have a bigger impact than you might think. Your lawn is only a small piece of land, but all the lawns across the country cover a lot of ground. That means you and your lawn care activities, along with everyone else's, can make a difference to the environment. And that's why taking care of the environment begins in our own backyards.



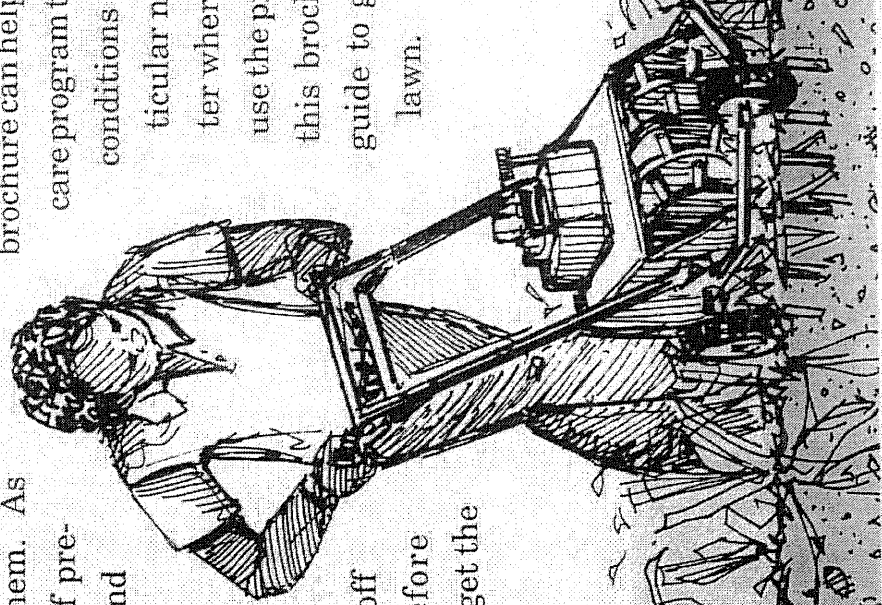
Working With Nature: A Preventive Health Care Program For Your Lawn

To start, think about lawn care as a **preventive** health care program, like one you would use to keep up your own health. The idea is to prevent problems from occurring so you don't have to treat them. As they say, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. A healthy lawn can out-compete most weeds, survive most insect attacks, and fend off most diseases—before these problems ever get the upper hand.

Your lawn care program should be tailored to local conditions—the amount of rainfall you get, for example, and the type of soil you have. The sources listed at the back of this brochure can help you design a lawn care program that suits both local conditions and your own particular needs. But no matter where you live, you can use the program outlined in this brochure as a general guide to growing a healthy lawn.

A preventive health care program for your lawn should have the following steps:

1. Develop healthy soil
2. Choose a grass type that thrives in your climate
3. Mow high, often, and with sharp blades
4. Water deeply but not too often
5. Correct thatch build-up
6. Set realistic goals



1. Develop Healthy Soil

Good soil is the foundation of a healthy lawn. **To grow well, your lawn needs soil with good texture, some key nutrients, and the right pH, or acidity/alkalinity balance.**

Start by checking the texture of your soil to see whether it's heavy with clay, light and sandy, or somewhere in between. Lawns grow best in soil with intermediate or "loamy" soils that have a mix of clay, silt, and sand. Whatever soil type you have, you can probably improve it by periodically adding organic matter like compost, manure, or grass clippings. Organic matter helps to lighten a predomi-

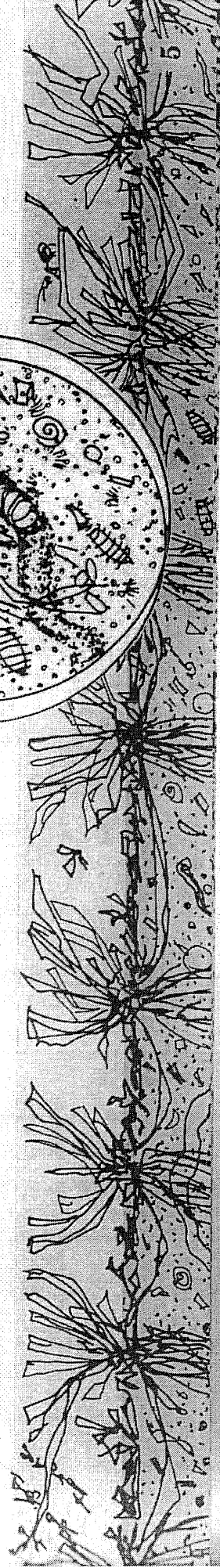
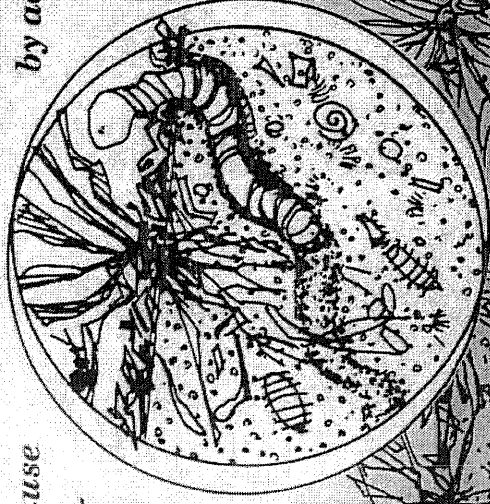
nantly clay soil and it helps sandy soil retain water and nutrients.

Also check to see if your soil is packed down from lots of use or heavy clay content. This makes it harder for air and water to penetrate, and for grass roots to grow. To loosen compacted soil, some lawns may need to be aerated several times a year. This process involves pulling out plugs of soil to create air spaces, so water and nutrients can again penetrate to the grass roots.

Most lawns need to be fertilized every year, because they need more nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium

than soils usually contain. These three elements are the primary ingredients found in most lawn fertilizers. It's important not to over-fertilize—you could do more harm to your lawn than good—and it's best to use a slow-release fertilizer that feeds the lawn slowly. It's also important to check the soil's pH. Grass is best able to absorb nutrients in a slightly acidic soil, with a pH of 6.5 to 7.0. **Soil that is too acidic can be "sweetened" with lime; soil that's not acid enough can be made more "sour" by adding sulfur.**

Have your soil tested periodically to see whether it needs more



2. Choose A Grass Type That Thrives In Your Climate

organic matter or the pH needs adjusting. Your county extension agent (listed in your phone book under county government) or local nursery should be able to tell you how to do this. These experts can also help you choose the right fertilizer, compost, and other "soil amendments," and they can advise you about aerating if your soil is compacted. If a professional service takes care of your lawn, make sure it takes these same steps

to develop good soil. There's no getting around it: your lawn's health is only as good as the soil it grows in.

The right type of grass—one that suits your needs and likes the local weather—will always give better results. Grasses vary in the type of climate they prefer, the amount of water and nutrients they need, their resistance to pests, their tolerance for shade, and the degree of wear they can withstand.

If you are putting in a new lawn, it will be worth your while to do some research to identify the best grass type for your needs.

If you're working with an established lawn that fails to thrive despite proper care, you might consider replanting with a different type of grass.

Why struggle to grow grass that's susceptible to fungal disease if you live in a humid climate? Or a water-loving species if you live in an area with water shortages? Grass that is well-adapted to your area will grow better and resist local pests and diseases better.

New grass varieties and mixtures come out on the market every year. Ask your county extension agent or another one of the sources listed in this brochure for recommendations.

