

LAWNS: YA GOTTA LOVE 'EM



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It's a clear correlation, really. Well, to me, anyway.

The amount of time I spend in front of the mirror staring at my receding hairline, somehow thinking I can will my locks back, is about equal to the minutes - no, hours - I anxiously stare outside our kitchen window to the umpteen bare patches on our one-acre lawn.

In hindsight, my new obsession with all things lawn-like is probably because I believe, even subconsciously, that I can at least control *those* bald spots.

Up until last summer - my 39th, not-so-coincidentally - I'd always vowed never to become one of those fanatical lawn guys, preoccupied with the price of top soil and peat moss. But that was before my diminishing hair

dilemma, which I'm slowly coming to accept as part of my near-40 life - like calling the remote control 'the clicker' and salivating over the Lee Valley Tools Spring Garden catalogue.

What I refuse to accept, however, is a lawn that's anything less than engaging to the eyes and supple on the toes. But here's my problem: I'm not very good at making my lawn likeable.

I do water it regularly, using one of those slow-spitting sprinklers. And since we have a drilled well, I figure that water is making its way back to its source, anyway.

I've also purchased enough 20 kg bags of black earth and sheep manure to hold off a flood - with only moderate success in filling in those bald spots.

(I blame my wife, Nancy, for much of our lame lawn, since she insisted we go with one of those low-growing, enviro seeds when we built our home, seed that, in my experienced opinion, offers all the success of a 19th century huckster's hair tonic).

That I adamantly refuse to employ any kind of chemical - (on my lawn or my head) - I realize, has a lot to do with my low ranking on the Lawn Guy class structure. To be sure, I abhor the use of 2,4-D and any of those awful, awful lawn drugs almost as much as I detest that corner that's infested with more weeds than you can shake a dandelion digger at. And that's a very real scenario, by the way,

since I do own an official Dandelion Digger - (originally dubbed, "Star Patent Daisy Grubber") - and do constantly shake it at those thousands of thistles.

Me and my Grubber welcome rainstorms. They loosen and soften the soil, which means it can plunge deeper...deeper, closer to that bastard's roots, allowing me to yank them out completely. I then hold up my bounty towards the sky, victory and euphoria covering my being. "Yes!" I scream. "I have won this battle. And I *will* win this war towards a wonderful lawn... eventually!"

My wife, meanwhile, watches from inside the house, wondering why I'd be out on the lawn in my pastel shorts and rubber boots during a downpour.

She'll never appreciate this ritual, since she's an avid non-lawn person. And she doesn't, I must point out, suffer from a receding hairline.