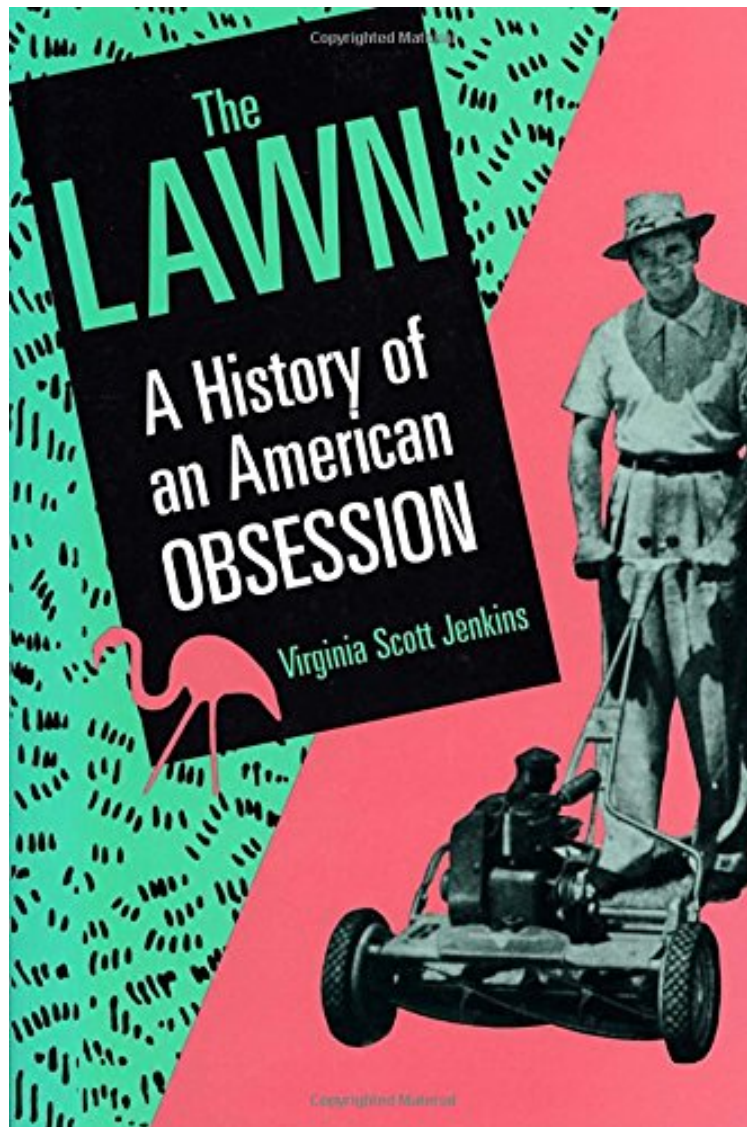


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The Lawn: A History of an American Obsession

Virginia Scott Jenkins

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Virginia Scott Jenkins : The Lawn: A History of an American Obsession before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Lawn: A History of an American Obsession:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Grass as the American DreamBy Barbara C. FertigReading this history of lawns sent me back to Currier and Ives, where I found that, indeed, there was little grass and lots of chickens around the family homestead. This is a likeable rediscovery of how our need to conform to standardized appearances has shaped our markets and our vision of democracy.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful

Cultural History, Contribution to Understanding (sub)Urban Form
By Amy E. Menzer
Anyone interested in how lawns came to be the "norm" and a standard signifier of upward mobility in America will find this book fascinating. For those who would like to encourage a different urban form (less lawns, houses closer to the street, new urbanism or smart growth) the book offers some hope by its demonstration of how something so "natural" was constructed over the last 80-100 years. The roles of technology, science, and gender politics, as well as class issues and environmental concerns are covered in a way that makes the story more entertaining and underscores the numerous fronts through which the lawn aesthetic was reinforced. I found this to be a great contribution to our understanding of how one element of the bigger picture contributes to larger trends affecting human settlement patterns, the ways we interact with each other and experience community, and even our public health. Now I need to read the history "air conditioning in america" to understand the role of that element....most cultural and social histories certainly cite issues like lawns and air conditioning as part of the dynamics, but don't have the time or space to examine the issue in depth--its great that Jenkins does this, even if it was a dissertation (and heck, that's one of the things dissertations are actually useful for...).
14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. A must-read for any homeowner!
By A Customer
This book's title is very appropriate. You will have no questions about how houses all came to be surrounded by lawns after reading this. It explains how agriculture, chemical companies, the garden industry, golfing, housing developments, world wars, etc... and the advent of new inventions have come together to result in an entire lifestyle revolving around 'the lawn.' The writing is smooth and it goes down easy, from cover to cover. Written in language anyone can understand, yet factual enough to hold the interest of those with some existing knowledge. There are about 20 pictures of vintage advertisements for lawn products, which I enjoyed seeing very much. There is also a good bit of detail about what used to grow on the property surrounding most homes before lawns.
Please also see, "Redesigning the American Lawn; A search for Environmental Harmony," by F. Herbert Bormann, Diana Balmori, Gordon T. Geballe.
This book takes up where we leave off. What is the impact of millions of monoculture lawns on the lifestyles and wallets of those who tend them, and on the environment? How can I change my yard to look better, and spend less time and money tending it (and to have less of a negative impact on the environment.)

Lawns now blanket thirty million acres of the United States, but until the late nineteenth century few Americans had any desire for a front lawn, much less access to seeds for growing one. In her comprehensive history of this uniquely American obsession, Virginia Scott Jenkins traces the origin of the front lawn aesthetic, the development of the lawn-care industry, its environmental impact, and modern as well as historic alternatives to lawn mania.