

NATURE

SUPPLEMENT

Vol. 144

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1939

No. 3648

SHORT REVIEWS

Agriculture and Horticulture

Seed and Potting Composts

With Special Reference to Soil Sterilization. By W. J. C. Lawrence and J. Newell. Pp. 128. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1939.) 3s. 6d. net.

THIS lucidly written and well-illustrated book forms a report of the authors' experimental work designed to overcome difficulties experienced in making mixtures or composts of soil, complicated by the necessity of sterilization to prevent fungal diseases. A close scrutiny of the available materials was followed by tests of various methods and apparatus used for soil sterilization, on a larger scale suitable for commercial purposes, and on a smaller scale convenient for amateur gardeners. The more frequent causes of unsatisfactory results are listed in the text, and the methods are critically evaluated.

Two thoroughly tested standard composts are recommended. By the judicious use of powdered chalk and superphosphates, added after sterilization of the loam, satisfactory growth of the seedlings of numerous plants has been obtained in the first compost; in the second compost, used for many pot plants, nitrogen is provided in organic form by horn and hoof grist, but it has been found necessary to supplement this, especially for pot-bound plants, by the addition of nutrients relatively rich in nitrogen in solution. This solution is prepared from a proprietary general fertilizer with the addition of ammonium nitrate or sulphate.

The success of the author's methods at Merton and the growing and widespread adoption of their procedure in the industry form the best notice of their work, which has already enhanced the reputation of the John Innes Horticultural Institution held by practical growers.

The Study of the Soil in the Field

By G. R. Clarke. Second edition. Pp. 192 + 1 plate. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1938.) 6s. net.

MANY improvements have been made in the second edition of Mr. Clarke's book. It is unique among English (and most other) books on

the soil in treating the subject entirely from the point of view of the student in the field and virtually ignoring the existence of the laboratory chemist and physicist. The true pedologist, says the author, should study the soil as an organism evolving under the influence of its environment, rather than as a subject for very impure chemical experiment.

Mr. Clarke tends to be somewhat dogmatic in his statements, and the inexperienced student will have to exercise care in accepting as facts what are expressions of the author's personal but usually well-founded opinions. Half the book describes the system worked out and used at Oxford for making and recording observations in the field, and the other half various systems of soil surveying and mapping used in different countries. Readers in some of these countries may object that their particular system has not received full justice, but what is lost in justice is gained in the simplicity of description which Mr. Clarke employs.

The book is intended to be carried in the pocket of the field worker, and will form a very valuable addition to his equipment.

Practical Lawn Craft

By R. B. Dawson. (Agricultural and Horticultural Handbooks.) Pp. 300 + 21 plates. (London: Crosby Lockwood and Son, Ltd., 1939.) 15s. net.

THE outstanding feature of this invaluable book is the thoroughness with which every detail connected with lawn craft is discussed. The combination of wide practical experience with exhaustive experimental work is evident throughout, and no aspect of the problem is too insignificant to be considered. An important feature is the comparison of the different management necessary for various types of sports grounds and for aerodromes, coupled with diagrams of the lay-out in several cases. The value of the book is much enhanced by the chapter on turf upkeep in other countries, which serves to correlate the various problems and to render the data of more general application. Amateurs and professionals alike owe a debt of gratitude to the author for his masterly presentation of a subject of such general interest.

W. E. B.