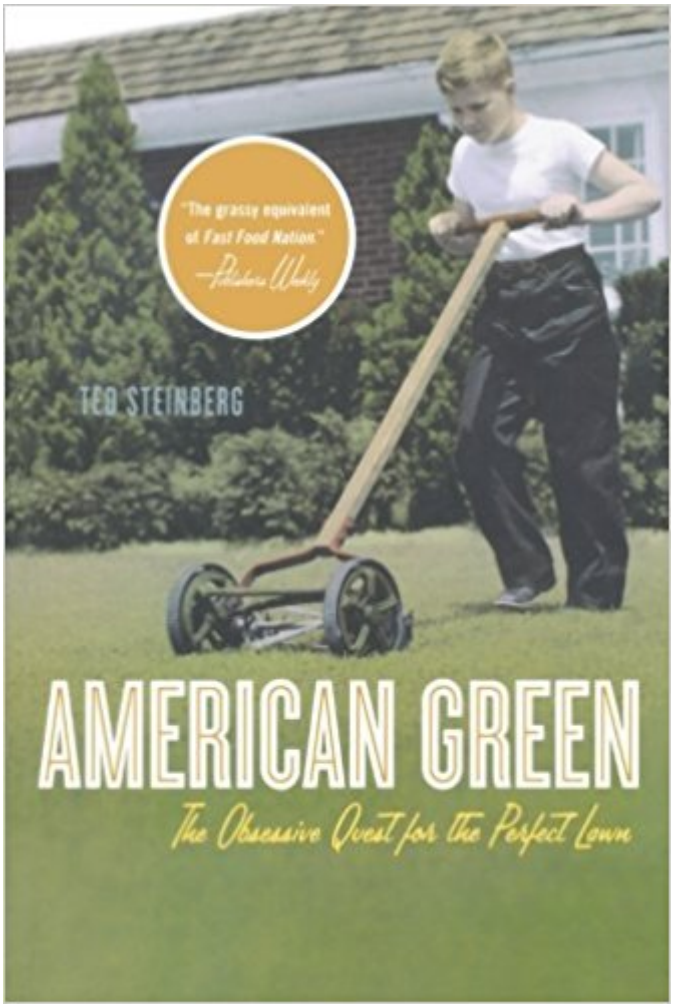
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American Green: The Obsessive Quest For The Perfect Lawn



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Synopsis

Ã¢â ¬Å“Ted Steinberg proves once again that he is a master storyteller as well as our foremost environmental historian.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â ¢Mike Davis The rise of the perfect lawn represents one of the most profound transformations in the history of the American landscape. American Green, Ted Steinberg's witty exposÃƒÂ© of this bizarre phenomenon, traces the history of the lawn from its explosion in the postwar suburban community of Levittown to the present love affair with turf colorants, leaf blowers, and riding mowers.

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Customer Reviews

Apartment-dwelling urbanites may be surprised to learn how significant lawn care is to the American economy, generating more than $10 billion in annual sales of pesticides, fertilizers and other products. Steinberg, an environmental historian, is aiming for the grassy equivalent of Fast Food Nation, with one key differenceÃ¢â ¬â •while people know junk food isn't good for them, they may not be aware that most lawn care products are not only unnecessary but may actually harm soil and turf. He particularly damns the lawnmower industry, revealing how manufacturers "worked tirelessly to mislead the American public" for years in order to avoid the expense of installing safety features that could prevent severed fingers. Steinberg's subjects range from the postwar boom in suburban lawns to contemporary debates over noisy leaf blowers, and he mixes cultural history with personal lawn-related experiences in Long Island and Ohio, where some people maintain putting greens in their backyards. (Not surprisingly, Steinberg points out, golf courses are "the most intensively managed lawns in America.") There's plenty of muckraking outrage, but it's delivered in a friendly,

engaging voice that might just win over skeptics. 40 illus. (Mar.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Infinitely more interesting than watching grass grow, Steinberg's study of grass becomes a rueful and revealing commentary on America's nearly myopic devotion to acquiring and maintaining the perfect lawn. Forget your purple waves of grain; America's predominant landscape feature is a lush carpet of pristine green grass mowed so short it couldn't wave if it wanted to. Tracing the sociological roots of this horticultural phenomenon from the burgeoning post-World War II cookie-cutter suburbs with their postage-stamp lawns to today's manicured, multiacre estates, Steinberg illustrates how and why American home owners have elevated their fascination with this humble plant into an obsessive Grail-like quest. From mowers to blowers, weeds to water, crabgrass to bluegrass, Steinberg dishes the dirt on the products and practices that get results, not all of them in the home owner's--or the planet's--best interest. Balancing his sardonic, tongue-in-cheek wit with an investigative reporter's penchant for revelatory journalism, Steinberg offers an expose that is as entertaining as it is instructive. Carol HaggasCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The book is interesting, mostly, with stories about how obsessed Americans are, and what lengths we'll go to, to maintain a patch of monoculture. If you know nothing about that history, it is a decent read. If you're already familiar with it, then it isn't all that appealing.It really needs some editing/proofing though, as it is chock full of typographical errors.

This was required text for American History II. I cannot say the topic was one of my favorites, but this novel contained a good deal of American lawn care history and purpose. I knew a good deal about lawns before I read this book, but I am proud to say I more than doubled my lawn vocabulary and knowledge base with this.Worth reading for informational and historical reasons. Product exactly as described, perfect condition.

I was introduced to this book through an environmental history class I took in college. I am studying agroecology and sustainable agriculture, so I came into it with a base knowledge that may have been more than was expected by Steinberg as his target audience and still absolutely loved it. Great research about present conditions and a fascinating look at the past. I would definitely suggest it to

anyone, especially people who grew up or presently live in the suburbs.

Steinberg shows in his book that our obsession with lawns has done more harm than good. The constant cycle of seeding, mowing, etc. is so labor intensive, and really does nothing for the planet, but it feeds our human, suburban-driven egos.It’s a very readable book, full of historical notes, anecdotes, and points about how the grass is NOT always greener; in fact, the "green" thing to do now is put your lawn on a diet, by reducing it, and place other types of foliage that are more beneficial like moss, native plants, and clover. The idea of endless turfgrass has proven to be detrimental. This book is a great motivator to choose alternative ground covers.

great read, thanks!

This is one of the most entertaining and informative books I have read in years. Steinberg, a clearly gifted author, has taken a seemingly mundane topic and written something that has depth, is interesting, and very humorous. I thoroughly enjoyed his writing style. I will read it again in the future.

But were afraid to ask.Perhaps it isn’t as amazing that someone would tackle this verdant subject as that there are actually two books which advertise themselves as a history of the lawn (see alsoÃ Â The Lawn: A History of an American Obsession), and that both include a form of the word obsession. It is important to state up front that I have completely missed out on this particular passion - crabgrass, clover and dandelions are welcome in my front yard, as are the ruts underneath the swing-set, the impressions left by my hammock frame, and the inevitable proliferation of mystery grasses growing up through the cracks in my sidewalks.I give that little bit of personal information because I’m trying to define exactly who I think this book is best suited for: The lawn-owner who has not yet crossed over to the fanatical, but who suspects they may be headed there. (Remember - people who don’t have a problem obsessing over their lawn don’t sit around wondering if they have a problem obsessing over their lawn.) If you are genuinely interested in your yard, yet are still able to have a sense of humor about your ardor, then this well-researched and sincere history of the lawn, lawn-care, and its future is targeted at you. If, on the other hand, you, like Clint Eastwood, are more likely to target trespassers on your lawn with a double-barrel shotgun, then perhaps there are other avenues open for your reading pleasure. (The Lawn Bible: How to Keep It Green, Groomed, and Growing Every Season of the Year)Author Ted Steinberg eschews

this theological approach and, while avoiding the ready-made opportunity for lampooning the idea, also never forgets that what we're talking about when we talk about lawns is really just grass - no matter what Scotts might want us to think. Divided into three parts, AMERICAN GREEN recounts the history of the lawn as we know it today, the side effects of the search for a perfect green, and finally new trends in the yard mentality. From the English idea of lawns to the hyper-conformity of Levittown; the history of Scotts and TruGreen ChemLawn; the environmental arguments; and the urge to merge with natural grass rather than turf grass, Mr. Steinberg is nothing if not thorough. After reading American Green, there is truly nothing more I want to know about the history of the Lawn.I think perhaps it is this exhaustive approach that drags the book down in the end. I believe that any subject can be made interesting by a skilled author, but the less-is-more cliche may have worked better in this instance. As it is, AMERICAN GREEN is too much for those interested in something diversionary, but probably not enough for true devotees of the lawn. That leaves a chunk of people who are just right for the book, but who are probably out laying down fertilizer rather than looking for some light reading to round out their hammock-time. Highly recommended for lawn-afficionados; probably of marginal interest to heretics like me.

As a reader of Crabgrass Frontier many years ago, I always knew that our lawns today are much, much different than what Americans of the first 150 years would know and while sitting through a recent City Council meeting in which it was determined that one subdivision was watering their lawns with about 14 feet of water a year, I knew there had to be a better way to maintain your lawn. Steinberg takes you from the history of lawns to history of lawn care. Along the way, Steinberg exposes you to some of the obsessive behavior of lawn care fanatics to the efforts of the anti-leaf blower campaigns. Steinberg exposes that most of our green lawns and lawn care habits are formed by marketing of companies likes Scotts and LawnChem or rely on plentiful low cost labor. Steinberg takes the lawn mower industry to task over mower safety (in a chapter that can be hard to read, especially if you have kids). Towards the end, Steinberg even takes on the native plant supporters, before telling you about his father's "Enlightenment Lawn."As one who doesn't fertilize, water and spread bug killer on the lawn excessively, I can feel a bit alone in the neighborhood, however, Steinberg's book lets me know that I have plenty of company

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