

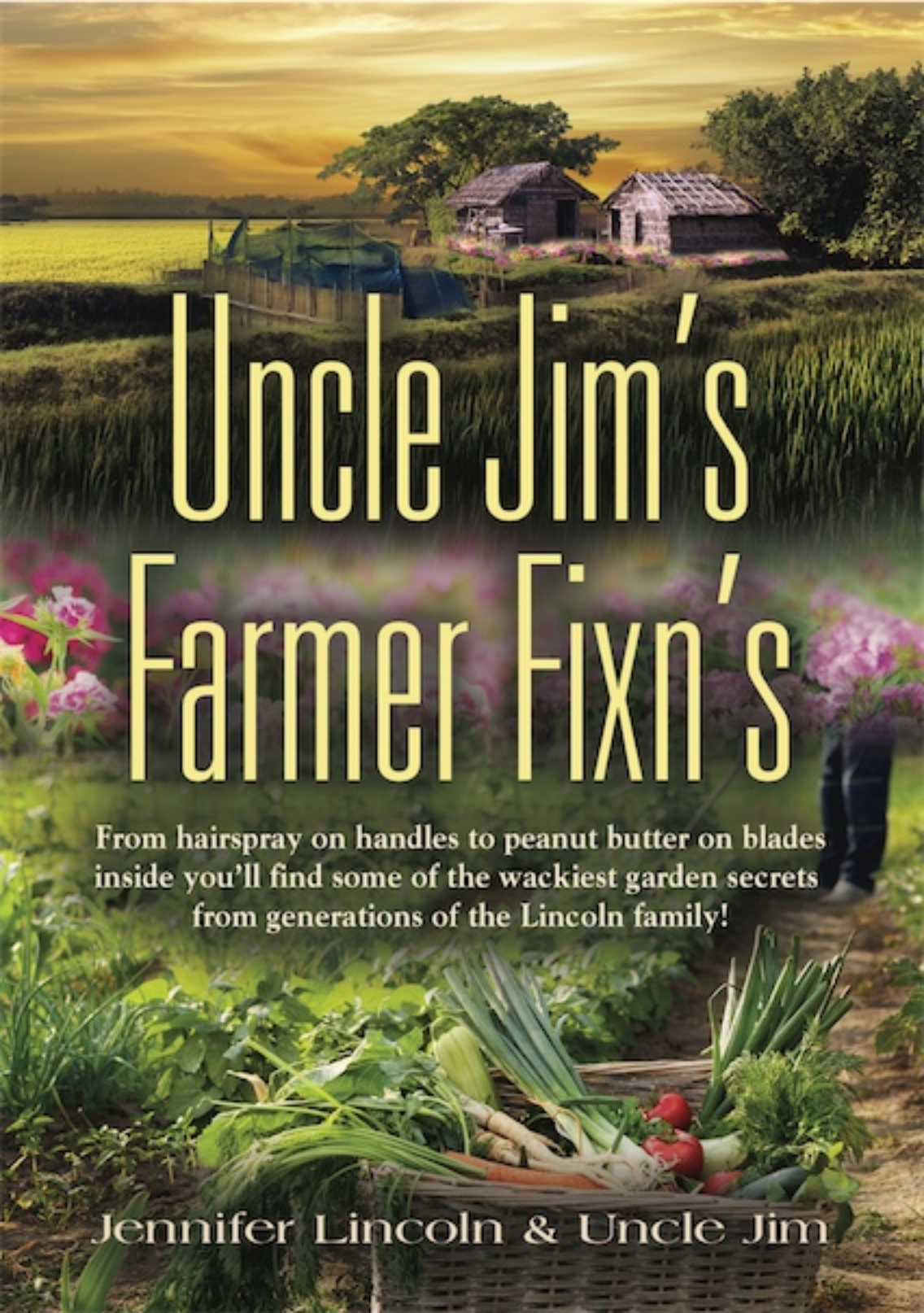
*Back to the 'burbs,
author Jennifer
Lincoln seeks farming
and gardening help
from her favorite
Uncle Jim!*

Uncle Jim's Farmer Fixn's

by Jennifer Lincoln And Uncle Jim


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Uncle Jim's Farmer Fixn's

From hairspray on handles to peanut butter on blades
inside you'll find some of the wackiest garden secrets
from generations of the Lincoln family!



Jennifer Lincoln & Uncle Jim

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Before you pull your first weed

It is imperative to take good care of your gardening equipment all year long. We will first start with your lawnmower. When you dig out your mower for the first cut of the season, you will need to inspect the condition not only for safety but accuracy. There are few things more aggravating than trying to trim your lawn with a mower that cuts unevenly causing you to mow and repeat until the lawn looks even.

Turn the mower over for a full inspection. The blades, nuts, and bolts should be tight and rust-free. It is the rust-free issue that you most likely will have to address first. At the end of each season, the savvy gardener will remove the nuts and bolts keeping them in a container filled with a moisture absorbing product, away from the elements; sleet, snow, and rain. An unseen cracked nut or bolt may become a hazardous situation. If this is your first time checking your mower here are some helpful hints.

First remove all nuts, bolts and the blades. You will need to remember where each one is supposed to go back to in its original and proper place. For some people, it is a no-brainer, but for the newbie, have several different colors of

nail polish or craft paints ready. Mark each nut and bolt with the different colors, so you know how to put everything back where it belongs. Nail polish may be purchased in dollar stores. Small bottles of craft paints cost around a dollar at your local craft store. If you have a pile of old colors from painting your home, save money, use them.

Once everything is removed and marked, it is time to clean. A simple bottle of cola will do the trick, soak the nuts and bolts overnight and bam the rust will disappear! Can you imagine what that cola is doing to the inside of your stomach if it can remove rust, you may become a bottled water drinker after you see the power of cola. There may be some stubborn spots; this is where you pull out some steel wool and do a little scrubbing. Once rust is removed scrutinize each piece, even the smallest crack could become a safety issue so replace what you need to before you use the mower.

The blades are essential safety checks, so a proper inspection is needed. If last years' lawn remnants are still stuck to the edges it is an easy clean up using apple cider vinegar. If the blades are extra grimy add some cornmeal to the vinegar for a good scrub. Old blades may need sharpening if you notice they look dull or you have not had them sharpened within the last two years your local

hardware store can grind them for a minimal cost. When you are ready to put everything back together, a helpful hint is to cover the blade shaft with a light coat of peanut butter. The oils in the peanut butter keep your blades running all summer smoothly.

Now we are going to look at your gardening tools. Did you throw them in a bucket at the end of the season? It is just as important to take good care of your hand tools so that they last year after year and do the job accurately that they were meant to do. Remove rust on your hand tools the same way you removed the rust from the mower; a bottle of cola overnight and a little extra scrubbing for the stubborn stains. After the rust is removed pull out your mayonnaise, yes that is what I said, mayonnaise. Pamper your tools with a light coat of mayo, not only will they shine but dirt and weeds will slide off more easily when gardening.

What happened? Can you not find the spade? You had it in your hand a minute ago, and now it is gone. A simple remedy for finding lost tools is painting the handles with bright neon paint. Craft stores sell the small bottles of paints that are correctly labeled neon. Neon comes in all colors, but your best bet is to choose a bright yellow, orange, lime green or even pink. These colors will help you find your tools easily in a pile of weeds. If you are working

with wooden-handled tools, a light coat of hairspray will smooth the wood and protect it from the elements. Hairspray also prevents splinters, so give it a shot. There is an alternative to painting your tools some gardeners use hair scrunches on the handles. It is the gardeners' choice, but if you use scrunches, make sure they are on as tight as possible.

Now let us talk about your clippers. When it becomes difficult to clip having to go at it several times before the cut is made, you know it is time to sharpen your clipper blades. There is no need to take your clippers to the local hardware store for sharpening, this job you can do on your own. Head to the kitchen and pull out the aluminum foil, cut a size that would cover one of your bowls then start clipping away with your clippers five to ten clips depending on how worn the blades had become.

Taking good care of your tools will make gardening a pleasure. When you take care of your devices, they will take care of you! I may be jumping ahead, but at the end of the season, it is essential to clean your tools and store them away for the winter in a tool friendly environment. Sand is a good friend to your tools even during the gardening season. Purchase a bag of sand and fill a bucket or large container to store your tools when not in use. The sand will keep

them dry and moisture-free. At seasons end store your tools in the sand, so next season you will not have to fight the rust and dirt. Always clean tools after using and pull out the mayo when you notice dirt and weeds start sticking to the devices.

Lawn Care, Trouble Spots, Feeding and Compost

Some folks chose not to plant flowers or veggies just mowing the lawn every Saturday is enough. Well if you are going to go with just the grass, you may as well make it the best-looking lawn on the block. Problems pop up as soon as the first spring day arrives. Weeds and Dandelions seem to appear overnight placing themselves where ever they please. Yanking, digging and pulling creates nothing but ugly holes in your lawn, a backache, and a new weed the next day. Learn to use mother nature at her own game.

Since it is the root of the weed that keeps them coming back, even the smallest piece of root left deep down in the dirt becomes your enemy. Just as your plants absorb water to grow, so do weeds and Dandelions so our target is the deep down root that you probably cannot see. The liquid is absorbed two ways first through the soaking of the soil and secondly through the pores in the plants. Here is where we plan our course of an attack.

Take a well-measured stroll across your lawn up and down, back and forth. While walking, identify all of the weeds, crabgrass, dandelions, and so forth to be destroyed. The

success of this procedure will take much patience. No pulling, no tugging, no digging but you may curse as much as you want. Take those well-sharpened clippers and cut the top of the weeds off, exposing the opening in the stem. Remember it is the root of the problem we want to get into to be successful. Now that you have an open stem just waiting for water to grow, you chose your poison. The easiest for me is household bleach. I always have bleach handy for cleaning and washing my whites. Bleach, ammonia or gasoline will do the trick. Previous generations of Lincoln's chose to use gasoline, but I am a little afraid of handling gas, so I stick to my bleach. Ammonia is another less frightening alternative.

Back to your open stem, grab your poison of choice and pour it directly into the stem. The nasty little weed will drink it right up just as if it were drinking water. It is not going to be an overnight fix. This process may be needed to repeat several times but stick to it. Do not give in to temptation by pulling it out. It is war, and you are going to win! Your poison of choice will work its way into the deepest part of the root system, killing the weed once and for all. After the plant has turned completely brown and lifeless, then you may pull it but not a moment before.

As your taking your initial inspection stroll, you might notice holes in your lawn. It could be any critter or snake, but you do not want holes in your yard. Holes are unsightly but also dangerous should you unknowingly step into one. Sprained ankles and crutches do not go well with beautiful summer days. If it is a single hole, chances are you may have a gardener snake that is good for eating the bugs we do not want. If there are several holes, you may be dealing with a mole.

There are seven species of moles in the U.S., and many states have laws against killing moles. Check with your states Natural Conservatory for the rules you must abide. The good news is that if you do have a mole that means you have plenty of earthworms under your lawn, keeping your soil nutrient-rich. The bad news is that moles can dig approximately eighteen feet per hour. Moles are most active 2 am – 7 am and 8 pm – 11 pm. If you are thinking about pulling your garden hose out to drown the little bugger forget about it, all moles know how to swim. Call your local Wildlife Control and let them remove the mole safely.

Is your lawn looking a little drab? As soon as the season begins if you want to give your yard a little perking up there are unique made fixtures, cleats, that adhere to your shoes for aerating your lawn. These cleats may be found in any

lawn and garden store, making it easy to prepare the ground for what is to come. There are numerous recipes for perking up the lawn and attacking brown patches after you aerate the lawn. The following are just a few different recipes to try whichever you have the easiest access to the ingredients I suggest you try first. Base each method on your using a 20-gallon hose spray; purchased at your local gardening store or homemade by using a barrel or trash can.

Lawn Pick me up Recipe #1

Pour 1 cup of weak tea (a strong cup will contain too much acid and do more harm than good), 1 can of flat beer and ½ a cup of Ammonia into your 20-gallon spray hose container. Fill the tank with water and mix well. Drench the lawn until there is a runoff.

Lawn Pick-me-up Recipe #2

Pour 1 bottle of Ammonia, 1 cup of non-antibacterial dishwashing soap and a can of flat beer into your 20-gallon spray hose container. Fill the tank with water and mix well. Drench the lawn until there is a runoff.

Lawn Pick-me-up Recipe #3

Pour 1 cup of baby shampoo; any brand will do even the Dollar Store brands are usable, ½ cup of Ammonia, and ½ cup of weak tea into your 20-gallon spray hose container. Fill the tank with water and mix well. Drench the lawn until there is a runoff.

Lawn Pick-me-up Recipe #4

Pour 1 10ounce box of Epsom Salt, 1 cup non-antibacterial dishwashing soap, and 1 cup of mouthwash into your 20-gallon spray hose container. Fill the tank with water and mix well. Drench the lawn until there is a runoff.

Brown spots on your lawn could be the result of many different factors. If your brown spots seem to be along the front of your yard by the sidewalk, this could mean someone is walking their dog and using your yard for the pooch's leftovers to put it politely. Once a dog finds your property the preferred dumping ground, it will continue to use that spot. In addition to using the following Brown Spot recipe, you may want to keep your eye out for the neighborhood dog that has chosen your lawn for its leftovers. Politely ask your neighbor to walk their dog on the

other side of the street. The best time to do this is when you catch the dog in action.

The Brown Spot recipe is simple, but it will take patience with repeating the process. I hate to raid your beer again but pour a can of flat beer, more if a spot does not get covered with one can then sprinkle inexpensive instant tea granules over the area. To help granules seep in pour more flat beer over the pellets. It is a repeat process until you see the precious little sprouts of grass coming back. Should the problem be caused by a neighborhood dog, head to a local pet store for a pet repellent, most repellents come in spray form and will not hurt the animal. Pet store employees are usually animal lovers, so asking for their help in choosing a safe repellent would be wise.

Feeding Time

Now that we have addressed the Pick-me-up and Brown Spots, it is time to feed your lawn with nutrients that will keep your grass as green and luscious as an Irish countryside. You are not going to believe all of the golden nutrients that you have been pouring down your drain! So let us begin with where you are going to store your nutrients all year long. If you do not have a barrel made of natural

wood, you may want to look at gardening supply stores or if you live near a winery, ask for a damaged barrel that you can fix yourself. If you cannot find a barrel, use a 20-gallon spray hose container easily found in lawn and garden stores. You will need a lid so try to purchase a cover that fits the barrel or tank that you have chosen. Designate this container for nutrients only.

The following are a few examples of nutrients that should be poured into your nutrient container year-round:

Fish tank water – if you own a fish tank every time the water needs to be changed; dump that old cloudy water into your nutrient container. The murky water contained fish waste and slugged off fish scales that are chock full of nutrients. If one of your fishes happen to pass away, my condolences, put the dead fish in the nutrient container also.

Pasta – spaghetti, angel hair, ravioli, any pasta that you boil leaves nutrients in the water after you boil. Drain your pasta, letting the water pour into a bowl instead of down your drain then add it to your nutrient container.

Tea bags – Many people use tea bags more than once. After using your tea bag twice place it in a mayonnaise sized glass

jar. After 4 -5 bags are saved boil water and pour into the jar. Let sit till the water is tea-colored then pour into your nutrient-rich water barrel.

Fresh Flowers - are always a joy to receive, but they need care. When the water starts to turn cloudy in your vase, pour it into your nutrient-rich water barrel.

Milk – When you finish with your carton or jug of milk, do you rinse and put it in your recycle bin? Good for you for recycling but do not waste that rinse before you toss the container. Rinse the milk container leaving the water in so you may pour it into your nutrient barrel. Then dispose of the container in recycle bin.

Here is a quick tip for your lawn, plant and people food, if you decide to purchase lawn fertilizer and are environmentally aware remember this; There is a difference between Naturally Made and Organically made. Naturally Made does not mean an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved the product. The label may read all-natural ingredients, but the company may be putting other un-environmentally friendly chemicals in the mix. Organically made products have the seal of approval from the EPA, they have been tested and approved by our government

watchdog, EPA. The same goes for people food, look for the EPA seal before purchasing.

Now you have a few ideas on how to treat your lawn so that it will look as green and luscious as that Irish countryside. You have ample recipes to choose from and a Spring and Summer full of Saturday mornings to roll out of bed and hit the lawn. A favor request from the City girl – please do not start up your mower too early in the morning sure it is best to mow by 10 am but can you wait till 11 am?

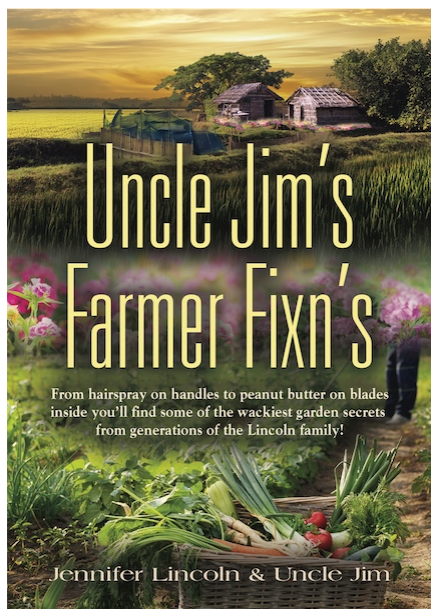
A quick word about Compost, the Webster's New World Dictionary has a simple description: A mixture of decomposing vegetable refuse for fertilizing the soil. It is true, but since my dictionary was published in 1996, we may need to expand on that description. I placed this information under lawn care because most composters' empty their grass clippings into their compost bin. Before unloading your clipping bags into the container, remember that you do not want to be fighting weeds any more than you have to. It means the weeds should not be dumped into the compost bin or they will be popping up wherever you use your compost.

Summer is not the only time to add to your compost bin. Food scraps, eggshells, used coffee grounds, and even pet

poo can be added year-round. Those lovely fresh flowers that have run their course is yet another source of compost. Brown paper bags torn into hand size pieces and a monthly can of cola poured on your compost are also great helpful hints. It is a year-round project. It is amazing to see mother nature at work as she breaks down, throw-a-ways into beautifully rich in nutrients soil. Search the internet or go old school and pick up a book on composting for tons of ideas and instructions on how to get the most out of your compost.

So now that you have inspected the lawn and addressed problem areas, fed with plenty of nutrients, let's make it look luscious. Set your mower for about three inches off the ground. Tallgrass stays greener as it retains more moisture and also better shades the soil, ensuring that the roots do not dry out.

The opposite is best for Fall season, cut grass as short as possible without scalping the lawn. It will prevent grass from folding over and becoming matted down. Not only will your yard look nicer over the Fall and Winter months but will also deter fallen leaves from getting caught up in the grass, creating the perfect hiding place for unwanted fungus and diseases.



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