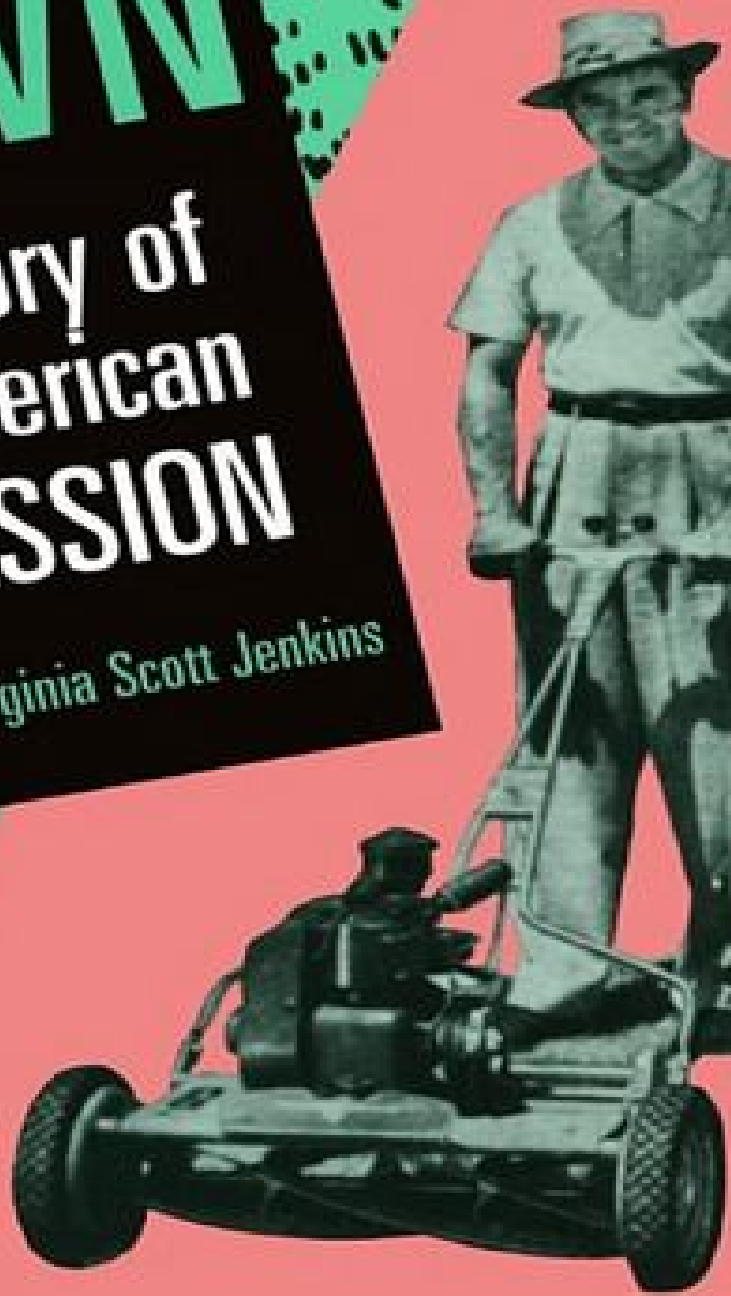


The LAWN

A History of
an American
OBSESSION

Virginia Scott Jenkins



As in World War I, the federal government encouraged citizens to plant victory gardens to provide themselves and their neighbors with vegetables so that commercially produced crops would be available for military use. Homeowners were exhorted to keep up the home front (literally the front of the house) for the morale of those at home and of loved ones in the service.²⁷ “A Message From Your Uncle Sam,” written by an employee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, assured readers, “In the Victory Garden campaign that is being planned for this year there is no thought of asking homeowners to spade up their front lawns or otherwise mutilate their ornamental plantings in order to grow vegetables. Too much of this kind of thing was done in the last war, and most of it paid pretty poor dividends.”²⁸

The lawn-care industry made a concerted effort to keep the front-lawn aesthetic in the forefront of the national consciousness in the form of superpatriotism. The Eclipse Lawn Mower Company appealed to future customers: “**Eclipse: The World’s Best Lawn Mower Stands By for V Day.** We should like to sell you a lawn mower. Building lawn mowers is our business. But winning the war in the shortest possible time and with the greatest possible saving of American boys’ lives has our highest priority. Next on our priority list will be peacetime production of our famous products. We will be ready. We are standing by.”²⁹ Other advertisements and magazine articles kept the concept of a perfect lawn alive, hoping to rejuvenate the industry at the