

# AN ADAPTABLE FLAME GUN UNIT

By A. D. Johnson

WHEN I am confronted with a plot of ground overgrown with weeds, I know of no quicker or more efficient way of dealing with it than by using a flame gun. A couple of applications will clear the most persistent weeds and leave the ground clean enough for either hand or mechanical cultivation.

There is, however, quite a difference in flame guns. Some tend to cool down quickly in use; some burners tend to burn out in use; and some are cumbersome to handle. I was then all the more impressed with the new flame gun made by Bering Engineering Ltd., Kingston-on-Thames, which has quite obviously been designed with a good deal of forethought to overcome these problems.

Although this is Bering's first gun, the designer himself is not new to this work and the problem of providing the hottest possible flame was approached scientifically after many experiments involving the use of temperature pencils in the flame.

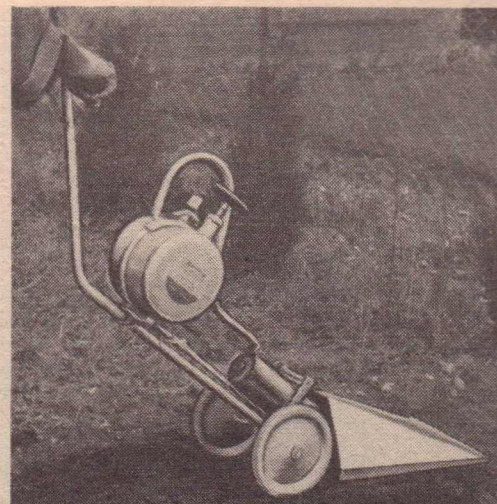
I should have thought that a short blue flame would have been the hottest, but the experiments have shown that this is not so, and the gun I tested produced a yellow-tipped flame nearly 30 in. long in still air.

Lighting is, of course, often a problem but special design of the coil has contributed to speed this up and I succeeded in igniting the "torch" in cool

is a hot brass stamping, and so is the filler screw and the control valve which has a fine copper filter built in to prevent dirt entering the firing head.

The gun weighs 10 lb. and being so well-balanced is not tiring to use, but on straight rows or open ground I preferred to use it on the wheeled carrier, which is specially shaped to make a compact unit. The carrier is fitted with hood in position as it gives better heat control, concentrates the heat on the ground and prevents damage by heat to any nearby plants.

In my opinion the hood is almost essential for pre-emergence weeding, a procedure which I use regularly on seed beds. This feature in itself makes a flame gun invaluable. It was brought home to me particularly forcibly last year when I sowed a large lawn. I sowed in stages and before the main sowing I ran the flame gun over the surface to sterilise any weed seeds; but, being in a hurry to complete the sowing I omitted the pre-emergence weeding before the final sowing. The area which had been treated germinated free of weeds: the last sowing was almost smothered and had to be treated with selective weed killer. In my experience pre-



THE COMPLETE UNIT IN USE

Here the gun is mounted on to the wheeled and hooded trolley for use on seed beds and the like



DEALING WITH LARGE WEEDS

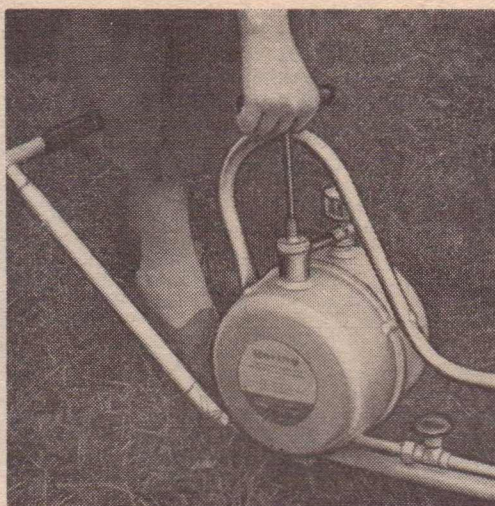
The gun is balanced to hang at the right angle in the hand. Note the powerful flame

open air, despite a breeze and without any special precautions. As with all flame guns, playing the flame on to a brick placed about 3 in. from the gun considerably shortened the warming up time.

The feature which really impressed me most was the balance and easy handling. Not only is the outfit exceptionally short and compact, but the handle has been designed, after many practical experiments, so that when the flame gun is carried with the arm in a natural straight position, the gun is balanced so that the flame hits the ground at the correct angle. I found the gun quite effortless to use, and quickly got the knack of using my knee to push it forward into odd corners instead of bending over.

I noticed that the tank was of unusual shape. This is because it is constructed from two halves of deep drawn steel welded together. There is thus only one welded seam. The designer told me that, although the operating pressure is only 45 p.s.i., the tank has been tested up to 140 p.s.i. It carries 1½ gallons of paraffin.

Without going too much into the technical details of the construction I should mention that the jet block, which is of special design to prevent blockage,



PRESSURE IS EASILY PRODUCED

A handy self-contained pump provides pressure in the strongly made tank

emergence weed killing has been even more effective under frames where there are no subsequent wind-blown seeds. I have used the Bering hooded gun within zins. of glass frames without damage.

An almost equally valuable attribute of the flame gun is, I find, its use in conjunction with my rotary cultivator. When a piece of vacant ground becomes weed covered, the cultivator blades are apt to become choked, whereas the use of the flame gun a few days before cultivating dries off the top growth. In this connection I find that there is no need to "burn" off the top growth—only to apply enough heat to scorch the weeds and cause them to flag. If perfectly clean ground is required I find that a second application about a week later will then burn off the residue completely.

There are, of course, many other applications, such as burning fire-breaks, starting bonfires and the weeding of orchards and soft fruit plantations.

I have, incidentally, dealt in this review only with the de-luxe model, the gun for which costs £8 15s. and the complete unit £12 15s. Two cheaper guns are made: one at £7 17s. 6d. without built-in pump, and one at £5 19s. 6d. without gauge and control valve. Both can be used with the hood and trolley.

## GARDENING CROSSWORD No. 187

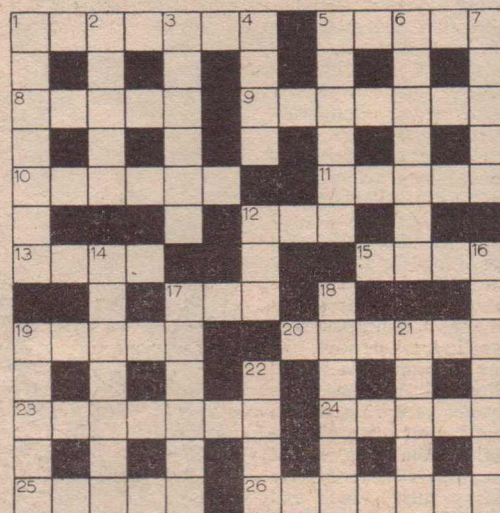
### ACROSS

- Presumably it would not be used as a dinner-table decoration! (7)
- Tree producing kapok for the church to a degree (5)
- There's nothing, alas, in this greenhouse annual (5)
- Rose man's name for a gladiolus (7)
- I part a conglomeration to find a perennial trailing plant (6)
- Is successful with cuttings (5)
- It's grown mostly in peat! (3)
- A most unusual lily? (4)
- Soil that would spoil a beginner, it appears (4)
- May be made by a gardener, or his wife (3)
- This lily is *Watsonia* (5)
- In a French town the Spanish produce fruit (6)
- Not a tan but this tree does produce dye (7)
- It may be a strain—winning it? (5)
- Depth of singular cultivation? (5)

- From Rita one greenhouse annual (7)

### DOWN

- Poe tale about a greenhouse shrub (7)
- A cab overturned on a banana relative! (5)
- Grazing animal starts a short list of wood sorrel (6)
- Suitable subjects for landscape gardens? (4)
- Any car ruins these hardy perennials (6)
- Oi, a poem written about Morning Glory! (7)
- Sailor partly Russian, climbs in a hothouse (5)
- Jacket for its Across (3)
- For plant used in commerce ring A.E.U. (7)
- If you want this orchid you'll have to get the catalogue on time (7)
- Insect used in mashing potatoes (6)
- Hothouse plant? (6)
- They produce a good many runners (5)
- Well-known weeper! (5)
- Part of a row or two of any vegetable (4)



Collingridge gardening books to the value of three guineas will be awarded for the first correct solution of this crossword opened. Solutions (in a closed envelope, marked "Crossword") must reach AMATEUR GARDENING, 2-10, Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, London, W.C.2, not later than the first post on the morning of Monday, 24th August, 1959.

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